

A Foucauldian Analysis of Power and Representation in an Attempt to Run a
Photovoice Project with Youth

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Abstract

This project evolved out of a search for ways to conduct research on “others” in a way that does not exploit, stigmatize or misrepresent their experience. This thesis is an ethnographic study in leisure research and youth work and an experiment in running a photovoice project. Photovoice is a participatory visual method that embodies the emancipatory ideal of empowering others through self-representation. The literature on photovoice lacks a comprehensive discussion on the complexity of power and representation. Postmodern theorists have proposed that participatory methods are not benign and that initiatives are acts of power in themselves that produce effects (Cook & Kothari, 2001). A Foucauldian analysis of power is used to deconstruct the researcher’s practice and reflect on why and how youth are “engaged”. This project seeks to embrace the principle of working “with” others, but also work from a postmodern perspective that acknowledges power and representation as ongoing problems.

Key words: Foucauldian analysis, photovoice, power, representation, decolonizing youth work

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Vignette 1: "Video screening night at the local gallery"

Field note, Thursday, June 26, 2009 6:00-8:00pm

Tonight was the video screening night at a local gallery of videos that the youth made with a local artist and the community development worker at the Youth Centre at Dovercourt. The community worker had asked me if I would be interested in volunteering to drive some of the youth and their families to the event downtown. When he called me today to give me the details he said that he had been over at Dovercourt earlier in the day to knock on doors, remind people that the screening was tonight and to try and encourage them to come. He said he had to "crack some heads" to get people to come out and that it would look bad if attendance was low. He seemed a bit disappointed and angry over the youths' lack of enthusiasm in attending. I arrived at Dovercourt before the screening to see who might need a ride and when I got there, Max, one of the youths from the centre was there but wasn't ready. He said he wanted to change his shirt and that his mother, aunt and baby sister would be going in another car. I saw his family and said hello as they go into another car. One of the younger girls, Charlotte who was a regular at the youth centre approached me in the parking lot and was upset that no one had arranged for her to come. So I said to her if she was ready and if her mom was okay with it that she could come with us. On the drive over I asked Max if he was excited and if he had a film in the screening. He said that he did and that he thought it might be cool. He wanted to know if I had been to the gallery before, what it was like, how big it was, how many people were going to be there? When we arrived at the gallery there was [were] about fifty people walking around, chatting and finding seats for the screening. Both Charlotte and Max

found seats near Max' family. They appeared to be the only family there from Dovercourt that I recognized. This screening night was designated specifically for the youth and their families, but there were also some representatives from the organizations that fund and facilitate the youth programming at Dovercourt and two other public housing complexes in the city. The worker and the artist who organized the project introduced the videos. The worker talked about the inspiration and purpose of the project; giving youth a voice, letting them express their views on their world, on their community, helping youth feel apart [a part] of the community by being able to comment on their own lives and experience in a larger forum, seeing value in youth perspectives, and value in communicating with each other. He had been quoted in the local newspaper the week before as saying that he hoped the project would help "give them something creative to do and keep them away from other things". The artist said that working with the youth over a weekend had been a great experience for him. He thought that all the films were unique and different and were important for people to see.

We sat back and watched five films that were shot at the three public housing complexes in St. Catharines. The videos from Dovercourt were lively and fun and made the neighbourhood look interesting and full of activity (which it is). The video that Max made with his friend was about a car that exploded in the parking lot, which they recreated by lighting a toy car on fire. Another was about watching "the game" at the basketball court, which showed a whole bunch of the kids running around and playing at the court. Another focused on how fun and happy it is at Dovercourt and featured a man sitting on a couch talking about how great the neighbourhood is,

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surrounded by kids. The videos from the other complexes were a bit different, more serious and quiet and didn't seem to have as many kids involved. One focused on bullying and showed someone pretending to be a stray cat who was picked on. Another featured interviews with youth talking about what they thought had happened at a unit where there had been a suicide. The longest video featured a middle-aged woman who has lived in her complex for over 20 years. She talked about the great sense of community in her neighbourhood and defended it by saying that it wasn't such a bad place to be. She told stories of the people who had come and gone and defended the neighbourhood against the negative stereotype that some associated with her complex.

The room was opened up for questions and comments and a couple of the youth said that it had been fun to make the films. The woman who had been featured in the last video stood up and again defended her neighbourhood as she has done in the film and said that she took pride in being a long time resident. She said that people should come by and visit and see for themselves. Another woman in the audience applauded the worker for putting the project together and relayed a story of how one of the kids had told her how much they liked him. Everyone applauded and started to mingle.

Max seemed to think that the Dovercourt videos were the best and that the others were kind of boring. A worker asked Max if he would talk to a reporter about his film.

While Max was being interviewed, Charlotte and I wandered around the gallery taking pictures and said hello to some of the staff that we recognized from the youth centre.

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Afterwards I asked Max how his interview went. He said they asked him what his video was about and why he made it and he had replied that it was hard to explain why. I asked what he meant and he hesitated, "I don't know it's just hard to come up with a long answer to that". I asked him what he thought of the evening and the presentation and he said it was all right, but that it was much smaller than he expected. "I thought it was going to be a big deal like the Oscars or something", he said. I laughed because I was surprised at his expectation, "why did you think that?" Max replied, "I don't know! They just made it out to be such a big deal, I thought it was going to be at some big place, I was kind of nervous about it, I thought I was going to have to give a speech".

Chapter 1: Introduction

“My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper- and pessimistic – activism”

(Foucault, 1983, pp. 231-232)

This thesis is an ethnographic study in leisure research and youth work. Specifically this study is an experiment in running a photovoice project with a group of youth who live in a public housing project in a small city in Ontario, Canada. This project evolved out of my search for a way to conduct research with “others” in a way that does not exploit, stigmatize or misrepresent their experience. The story of Vignette #1 “Video Night at the Artist’s Centre” is from a field trip that I participated in during my volunteer hours at a local youth centre that is run out of a social housing project. My experience at the video screening and my conversations with the youth workers and youth lead me to question the extent that this video project was youth driven, how interested the youth were in participating and the purpose behind representing youth perspectives from the communities that were involved. This story also highlighted many of the ethical issues and problems that researchers identified in participatory projects that seek to engage and empower marginalized groups through public, self-representation. Problems involving the power dynamics involved in encouraging or persuading youth to participate, the stigma associated with living in public housing and the ambiguous and sometimes negative impact of representation.

It was shortly after this video project was screened that I embarked on a similar image based project, with the youth from this community using photography instead

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of video. Photovoice is a participatory visual research method that uses photography to explore and represent social experience and is based on similar principles that the youth workers identified in the video project: the empowerment of marginalized groups through representation and communication. A basic tenet of photovoice is that representation is liberating or empowering for marginalized communities (Wang & Burris, 1997). I wanted to learn how to work with youth using a creative method, but I wanted the project to be something that was youth driven and I didn't want youth to experience stigma or any negative impact associated with representation. How could I approach and work with youth in a way that interested them and also did not result in stigmatizing them or reproducing them as a "marginalized other"?

Photovoice is based on a modernist approach to the understanding of power and representation. Power is viewed as a thing that is owned or held by people located in the dominant "centre" of society, which can be used to access the dominant systems of organization within a society, one of which is the system of representation (Wang & Burris, 1997). While people who exist outside of this "centre", who may lack financial resources, education and access to systems are thought of as being without power. From a critical, modernist perspective, marginalized groups need to be included in and granted access to dominant systems so that they can access power and influence decision-making. Research projects such as photovoice seek to "empower" marginalized groups by sharing power and by providing participants with the tools to represent (visual literacy) and access to the system of representation (public exhibition or communication with decision makers) (Wang & Burris, 1997). In photovoice, images and text are used to represent the experience of marginalized groups in an

effort to recover and share subjugated knowledge for the purpose of challenging dominant ways of thinking and influencing positive social change.

A postmodern perspective challenges the foundation of photovoice projects by proposing that; 1. other forms of power or power dynamics are ignored, namely disciplinary power , 2. that engaging in representation is always a positive and rewarding experience and 3. that social experience can be fully represented without complication (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). A Foucauldian (1977, 1978) perspective on power as a set of force relations that produce and discipline subjects is useful in analyzing the complexity of power in participatory work and the potential of any research project to make subjects visible and knowable through research. Other postmodern researchers critique modernist projects for failing to acknowledge the “crisis of representation” which is the limit or inability of representation to ever fully or accurately present the dynamics of social experience (Tyler, 1986) or “social space” (Lefebvre, 1991). Despite the complexity of power dynamics and the limits of representation, a method like photovoice has the potential to provide creative and collaborative encounters between researchers and participants. As a researcher, I wanted to understand how I could embrace the participatory principle of working “with” rather than “on” youth, but also work from a reflective, postmodern perspective that acknowledges power and representation as ongoing problems. How does a postmodern approach to photovoice play out in practice with youth? How can I engage youth, work with youth and understand their experience in a way that is ethical, without objectifying or stigmatizing youth? How can I engage in research with youth in the spirit of what Foucault (1983) called “hyper and pessimistic activism”?

How can, and how should, leisure research be done?

My search for ethical methods has led me to participatory forms of research and to photovoice that embodies the emancipatory ideal of empowering others rather than exploiting them (Wang, 1999). I am interested in photovoice because of its creative and collaborative potential for researchers and participants to work and play together and reflect on and share multiple experiences from different perspectives. Initially I was attracted to the photovoice methodology because it appeared to offer a solution to the problem of representation by democratizing it (Packard, 2008). However a review of the literature on photovoice projects showed that even when participants were involved in their own representation they could still be stigmatized by it. Participants were still framed as marginalized, different and as in need of “help” from outsiders (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Walsh, Hewson, Shier, & Morales, 2008). How can a photovoice project be run using a postmodern philosophy? Through this attempt, is it also possible to understand how a postmodern approach plays out in practice? If power is a force that is enacted through our everyday interactions and “everything is dangerous” as Foucault warns, how can I engage participants in photovoice with “hyper, pessimistic activism”?

The tradition of western research has been an attempt to understand, to know and predict how people “tick”, how they work, how they feel, what they think, what they do and why. Since the advent of postmodern theory in the 1970’s, there has been much debate and concern in different academic fields regarding the legitimacy and ethics of research on the human social experience (Geertz, 1988; Lyotard, 1984; Said, 1978; Tyler, 1986). Of particular concern is how research contributes to what Edward

Said (1978) has called the process and practice of “othering”. Said proposed that researchers have produced accounts of the East through a Western gaze that distanced and “othered” non-Western cultures and peoples through a process he called Orientalism. Said claimed that the West’s encounter with others including their definition and representation often as “primitive” and “exotic” was a form of colonial domination. The postmodern turn has encouraged a re-reading of traditional research texts as subjective accounts that produce others rather than as objective accounts that reflect reality (Geertz, 1988; Tyler, 1986). An ethical dilemma emerged out of the problematic encounter between researchers and participants; what does research do to participants? What should it do? Who should research and how? And finally, can research be done without “othering” participants?

Central to the postmodern critique of traditional research is the issue of power and a reconsideration of what power is and how it functions. Michel Foucault (1978), conceived power as a productive force that is relational, rather than as a thing that is held or possessed. Research then can be reconceived as a relational act of power that produces subjects and makes them visible through their examination and representation. Critics of ethnographic research have proposed that anthropologists have “systematically misrepresented social reality by presenting images of homogenous cultural “wholes”; have silenced alternative visions and voices in favour of those toward which anthropologists...are most disposed; and that the very act of representing others not only bears with it moral responsibility, but, more sinisterly, is a form of domination” (Lutkehaus & Cool, 1999, p. 116). A crisis of representation emerges from the assertion that what we know as reality is always changing,

contextual and in flux. Representation is always partial and limited because it presents a fixed, static and coherent portrait of reality, which according to postmodernists does not exist (Clair, 2003; Geertz, 1988; Lather, 2001a; Tyler, 1986). Researchers have reacted in different ways to the crisis of representation and have proposed different methods that seek to deal with or address issues of power and move towards more participatory forms of representation in research.

Postmodern ethnographies approach the “problem” of truth, power and representation from a different perspective in that research methods and strategies are not intended to solve problems or tensions in research and instead highlight and explore them (Lather, 2001b; Visweswaran, 1994). Rather than searching for truth or uncovering “the way it really is” postmodern methods attempt to deconstruct meaning. Research acknowledges the socially constructed nature of reality and seeks to draw attention to its construction through discourse and everyday interactions. Issues of power and power imbalances between researcher and participant are not eliminated but are instead investigated as an ongoing dynamic. Rather than focusing solely on the experience of participants, the researcher becomes the subject of inquiry in an attempt to deconstruct binaries and explore the mutually dependent relationship between self and other (Lather, 2001a; Skott-Myhre, 2008; Tyler, 1986). Finally, postmodern ethnographers approach the crisis or ethics of representation with caution. First, by including themselves as subjects researchers attempt to subject themselves to the same risks of representation and visibility through research that they ask of participants. Second researchers attempt to avoid representation by undermining or challenging any single or privileged reading of “the research story”. Multiple presentations of data

from different perspectives and in different forms are intended to evoke new possible meanings that change and shift with no clear or decided conclusion (Clair, 2003; Richardson, 1994; Tyler, 1986).

Researching and working with “youth”

I first considered working with youth because I thought there was a possibility that I was young enough or close enough to my own youth that I would not feel or would not be viewed by youth as very different or as completely “other” to youth participants. In an effort to reduce the possibility that I would “other” participants I wanted to research a group that perhaps I had some connection to. Regardless of one’s chronological age, we have all been “youth” at some point in our lives or have been classified and treated as “youth”. I remember being a teenager and feeling “othered” by adults when teachers or parents would dismiss my opinions and label my behaviour and feelings as immature, undeveloped, dangerous or deviant. Even though I am now an adult, I hoped that these memories would help me to approach youth as equals or at least with the suspicion that “adult” privilege is often unwarranted and that the youth-adult binary is a construction. I also grew up in the city where this project took place and have some understanding of what it is like to hang out in and be dependant on the public spaces of a small city for leisure. For this reason I was interested in exploring the spatial experiences of youth in the spaces that they used for fun and leisure.

Throughout history, youth have theoretically occupied an ambiguous and uncomfortable space in public consciousness (Giroux, 2003; Skott-Myhre, 2008). Youth are consistently framed as a problem of being “risky” to society, or “at risk” of becoming a problem for society (Malone, 2002). Or in other words, youth are viewed

through a modernist binary lens that frames youth as either deviant and therefore dangerous or vulnerable and in need of protection. From either perspective on youth, social control is justified through an ideology of fear and a need for safety (Giroux, 2003; Malone, 2002). The categories of youth and adult are constructed in a way that frames youth as the physically, psychologically, and emotionally underdeveloped “other” to their responsible, mature adult counterparts (Skott-Myhre, 2008). The binary youth-adult framework is also very powerful in that it justifies the complete and unquestioning authority of adults over youth by producing youth as a group to be managed and adults as a superior authority or keeper and care taker of youth.

An analysis of the everyday experiences of marginalized groups or “others”, such as youth are important in that they can reveal and expose contradictions between dominant conceptions of youth and their lived experience. An analysis of these contradictions can also assist in revealing the power dynamics that are often taken for granted as normal and natural. bell hooks (1984) proposed that an investigation into the experience of the marginalized has the potential to expose or shed light on the dominant power structures imposed by the centre, like constructions of adulthood and youth. Postmodern researchers (Lather, 2001a; Skott-Myhre, 2008; Tyler, 1986; Visweswaran, 1994) have proposed that it is equally imperative to pursue “a way in” by shifting the lens of analysis away from “the other” and towards “self” in order to deconstruct how self contributes to the construction of the “self-other” binary. An investigation into my role and experience as an adult on my own and in relation to youth, may also help to break down or deconstruct the taken for granted construction of youth and adult.

How this study evolved

This thesis was inspired by my interest in finding research methods that would allow me to connect and engage with others, specifically youth in a way that does not objectify or exploit. At the time of the study proposal there were two research aims. First to explore for myself how to engage in research with “others” or in other words, how to engage in research that does not “other” participants. Further to this aim, to explore and understand how to engage and work with “youth” while being conscious of power dynamics and ethical issues regarding representation. And second, to explore and analyze the spatial experience of youth in local public spaces or any place that they used for leisure in an attempt to understand how youth experience power spatially. I intended to “get at” the spatial experience of youth through running a participatory, photovoice project. This study ran over the course of the summer of 2009, during which I attempted to run a series of photovoice inspired workshops with a group of youth recruited through a local youth serving agency.

Photovoice is intended to address the ethics of “how to” work with youth in a way that is “participatory” by giving youth control over the process and purpose of a research study. However, a review of the literature on photovoice projects leads to a discussion around the complexity of power and representation and the differences between modern and postmodern conceptions of both (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Prins, 2010). In photovoice projects intended to “give voice” and empower the marginalized, researchers and participants have reported contradictory experiences related to surveillance and stigma (Packard, 2008; Prins, 2010; Walsh et al., 2008). Postmodern theorists have proposed that participatory methods are not benign and that

participatory initiatives are acts of power in themselves that produce effects (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Mosse, 2001).

Running a photovoice-style project with youth using a postmodern approach was an experiment of sorts and required an open-ended approach to the research process (Tyler, 1986). I had to be flexible and responsive to the changes that took place as a result of my encounter with participants as the photovoice workshops unfolded and had to be comfortable with not knowing what was going to happen. In addition, to explore power dynamics in my interactions with youth I had to explore my role as an adult and as a researcher who was approaching and attempting to engage youth. In the spirit of decolonizing youth work and research and “making myself visible” (Skott-Myhre, 2006), I was as much a participant or subject in this research project as were the youth. It was through my experience of running this project that I was able to explore the tensions and dilemmas that are inherent in research and move away from viewing both youth and barriers to running a research project with youth as problems to be fixed or eliminated.

The overall aim of this project for me remained the same in that I was interested in working out my own ethics of how to engage others or “the other” in research. However, the specific research questions in this study have changed and evolved throughout data collection and continued to change after I “left the field” and was no longer working with the youth. The reason for these changes was a shift in my understanding of both modernist and postmodern approaches to research and how power plays out and functions through encounters with others. Further, my experience of working with youth using photovoice provided a deeper understanding of the

failure of representation to ever fully re-present an experience and the potential consequences of attempting to represent for youth and the community that they live in.

In light of these issues, I set out to run a photovoice project from a postmodern perspective by leaving the traditional steps of the method optional or open to change depending on what participants wanted out of the project. My plan was to facilitate a project with youth that honored the right of youth to participate on their own terms and was conscious of power and its effects, but also retained the collaborative and creative potential of the photovoice process. Rather than answering a set of specific questions, this project is more an exploration into my own experience and evolution as a researcher and youth worker in relation to my understanding of postmodern approaches to working with others and power. Two main guiding questions drove the direction of this study: *how and why should researchers engage others?* And *how does a postmodern approach to photovoice play out in practice with youth?* How can I engage youth, work with youth and understand their experience in a way that is ethical, without objectifying or stigmatizing youth? How can I engage in research with youth in the spirit of what Foucault called “hyper and pessimistic activism”?

Chapter 2: Background

Photovoice is a participatory visual research method that is based on a modernist conception of both power and representation and is informed by critical theory. Photovoice is based on participatory principles that seek to “share” power or “empower” research subjects or project participants by including them in the research process. Community health researcher and founder of the photovoice method, Caroline Wang (1997) cites three major theoretical principles as having influenced the development of photovoice; 1) critical consciousness and problem-posing education developed by Paolo Freire (1970), 2) feminist theory and the assertion that the experience, perspective or voice of women and other marginalized groups are often ignored and rendered invisible through research that privileges dominant, male perspectives (Wang & Burris, 1997) and 3) social documentary photography and the belief that visual documentation of social life or reality will help solve social problems by making them visible.

A description and history of Photovoice

Photovoice uses participant produced photography as a tool in research-driven efforts to effect positive social change. Wang’s (1997) photovoice method has three goals: “(1) to enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policy makers” (p. 370). Photographs taken by research participants of their everyday lives are used to create dialogue, promote understanding and “empower” marginalized groups who are typically represented by others.

Because photovoice is a participatory method with social change goals, it is congruent with the principles of participatory action research (PAR) and is often cited as a form of action research. Similar to PAR, the goal of photovoice is to bring a group together from a particular community or social group to discuss and reflect on issues that effect participants and their community for the purpose of brainstorming ways to deal with problems and then engage in a plan of action for change. The action phase of photovoice involves bringing the issues, concerns and opinions of a particular group to people in positions of power in an attempt to influence the decisions made at a policy level. PAR is intended to stimulate collective, critical consciousness for the purpose of empowerment and grassroots led social change.

Photovoice and participatory photography programs take place in different contexts: within a research project, as a needs assessment tool (Wang & Burris, 1997), an educational tool (Barndt, 2001; Chio & Fandt, 2007; Clover, 2006), an artistic venture (Ewald & Lightfoot, 2002; Hubbard, 1991) or as a local community development initiative or charity (PhotoVoice, n.d.; PhotovoiceHamilton, n.d.). In each context, the participatory photography project leaders emphasize the positive benefits associated with the collaborative steps of creation, dialogue and presentation. The benefits of these steps include; the promotion of a democratic form of expression and a participatory form of knowledge production, the development of new skills for participants such as critical thinking and visual and written literacy, community development within the photography group itself and the larger community to which participants belong, and in general, positive social change (Barndt, 2001; Ewald & Lightfoot, 2002; Walsh et al., 2008; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

The Three Phases of Photovoice: Creation, Dialogue, and Presentation

The overall process of photovoice can be narrowed down to three important steps that are all considered to be empowering to participants in their own right, and combined potentially lead to grassroots social change: (1) Creation and Documentation, (2) Dialogue and Reflection, and (3) Presentation and Sharing. I will now outline in detail the three common components of participatory photography and photovoice projects and how the above stated benefits develop out of the activities in each phase.

(1) Creation and Documentation of Local Knowledge and Experience

The creation and documentation phase begins with participants and researchers taking a collaborative approach to the planning and brainstorming of topics and issues that the group would like to explore. In a photovoice project, a researcher will begin by explaining the principles of photovoice and asking participants about the community issues or strengths the group would like to document. In community-based art projects, facilitators may introduce semi-structured assignments that allow participants to focus on a particular aspect of their lives, but also give participants the freedom to explore their own ideas and have control over image content. Finally, the creation and documentation component of photovoice helps to build the technical skills necessary to create effective visual images and the visual literacy skills required to brainstorm, plan and convey through photography, the experience, feelings and issues that participants have identified as important to them. Critical thinking skills and critical reflection are also introduced through the collaborative process of setting

an agenda of communal issues or topics and the process of brainstorming community strengths and weaknesses.

(2) Dialogue and Reflection

The dialogue phase of photovoice is designed to allow participants to articulate their experience, share it with others in the research group and compare and contrast it with the perception and experience of others. In Ewald's (2002) approach to participatory photography, participants swap images before presenting them and engage in story writing exercises based on the pictures from others in the group. Participants then share their stories with each other based on their partner's photo, and discuss the differences and similarities between the photographer's intended story or meaning and the meaning derived from another viewer. The reflection component focuses on group presentation and discussion and uses group work photo-elicitation where images can help to trigger multiple stories and reveal different individual perceptions. A photograph captures a particular moment and freezes it in time, which allows a unique opportunity for reflection on that moment. This participatory process of presentation and discussion is complementary to critical theory because images can be used to critically reflect on the issues and experiences that are brought to light through visual material.

To facilitate dialogue and reflection, Wang (1997) uses the SHOWED method of analysis, which poses the following questions: What do we See here? What's really Happening here? How does this relate to Our lives? Why does this problem/condition/strength exist? How could this image Educate the community/policy makers? What can we Do about it? The SHOWED method of

image analysis in photovoice also connects the reflection on issues to the action and presentation portion of action research by asking how the images that participants create can communicate valuable information about the issues that effect them and help instigate change.

(3) Communication and Sharing of Stories/Images

The third phase of photovoice involves communication and sharing of stories and images to a broader audience. As visual images, photographs are an accessible form of communication in that they relay information to others in an engaging form that is easily distributed or displayed. While the knowledge produced through a photovoice project is used by researchers to produce a piece of academic research, many projects also result in public presentations of the stories and experiences captured through the research process in an attempt to communicate the results to a wider audience. This audience may include the local community and persons in positions of power that make decisions that affect the lives of those represented in the project. In many cases (Royce, Parra-Medina, & Messias, 2006; Walsh et al., 2008; Wang, 1999, 2006; Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000), action is the public display and presentation of the local knowledge that has been created through participant documentary photography. The public act of expression and the potential dialogue that expression encourages with the local community and with policy makers is one that acknowledges the participant's stories and subjective realities as important and of value. Public expression of one's views and experience, along with possible public recognition of participant perspectives is considered to be an empowering action in itself.

Much of the literature on photovoice frames the method as a positive tool that assists in the empowerment and emancipation of marginalized groups through a relatively uncomplicated process of documentation, discussion and expression of participant voice (Ewald & Lightfoot, 2002; Royce et al., 2006; Strack et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2000). Another body of literature from the field of development studies contradicts and calls into question the idea that participatory methods are uncomplicated and benign tools. Cooke and Kothari have criticized participatory development processes for having the potential to be “tyrannical”(2001). Many of these critiques draw on Foucauldian notions of power in order to examine the ways in which participatory methods and the researchers that use them gloss over or simplify the complex power relationships that play out in practice. More recently, researchers have begun to critique photovoice research as similarly under theorized (Peters, 2009) and lacking in an analysis of how power functions or plays out throughout photovoice research projects (Packard, 2008; Prins, 2010).

A postmodern view of power - Foucault

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) proposed that power can be conceived and exercised in more than one way; first and historically as a direct form or authority like a sovereign that rules through domination, violent force or laws. In this first and more common conception, power is conceived as a thing that is held and wielded by an authority in ways that are overt and restrictive. Of interest to Foucault is a secondary conception of power, not as a thing but as an omnipresent force, a set or “multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate” (p. 92).

Two key assertions of Foucault's conception of power are that it is both relational and productive.

First, Foucault conceived power not as a thing that is held or housed, but as a force that is enacted and occurs between people. According to Foucault, "power is everywhere", no one is with or without power, nor does anyone exist outside of it. Second, Foucault proposed that power is a productive force that works to produce and govern subjects. In *Discipline and Punishment*, Foucault traces the development of strategies in western and liberal democratic societies that focus on the art of governing and management of populations (1991). Foucault (1977) coined the term "governmentality" to explain how power functions to manage and discipline the behaviour and conduct of the subject. Disciplinary power functions through the production of the individual subject (the subject that is to be governed), the production of truth (which orders and informs the way things are, or should be, namely through discourse) and through encouraging or developing self-regulation and self-discipline in subjects (surveillance, internalized, accepted and monitored norms).

Foucault used the example of psychiatry as a body of knowledge to analyze how "truths" function to produce subjects and then regulate and discipline their behaviour. Psychiatry serves to construct what behaviour is "normal" and also what is "abnormal" and therefore deviant. Bodies of knowledge are most effective in ordering behaviour when they are accepted as objective science or as truth and internalized as natural and normal. The production of "subjects" based on regimes of truth or modes of classification are numerous and are not limited to constructions of gender, race, class and age. There are many social groups or subjects that are "othered" through

discourses that construct them as inferior and unstable based on developmental science. Many marginalized groups, including youth are conceived of as basic, unable to control their impulses, backwards and less developed than their binary counterparts. Othering takes place through many modernist constructions such as east/west, female/male, poor/wealthy, youth/adult, gay/straight and black/white.

The construction of youth as subject

From Foucault's perspective, and other postmodern youth researchers (Giroux, 2003; Skott-Myhre, 2008; Tait, 2000), "youth" as a subject is a historical, socially constructed category. It is easy to take for granted what we mean when we use the term "youth" to refer to a group of people in a particular stage of life. Youth as a categorical stage of life was naturalized through the western discourses of medicine, psychiatry and the separation of youth as a social group during the development of industrial capitalism. Developments in the field of western medicine and psychiatry linked age with stages of physical and emotional development that defined youth and adolescence as a stage of life where people are less "developed" than adults. Like all modernist constructions, the definition of "youth" as a category is contingent on the comparison to the definition of "adult". Youth are "othered" as physically, psychologically, and emotionally underdeveloped in comparison to their responsible, mature adult counterparts (Skott-Myhre, 2008). Throughout history, youth as "other" has theoretically occupied an ambiguous and uncomfortable space in public consciousness (Giroux, 2003; Skott-Myhre, 2008). Youth are consistently framed as a problem of being "risky" to society, or "at risk" of becoming a problem for society (Malone, 2002). In dominant discourse, youth are commonly framed as either, deviant

and therefore dangerous or as vulnerable and in need of protection. From either binary perspective on youth, social control is justified through an ideology of fear and a need for safety (Giroux, 2003; Malone, 2002).

Governing discourses associated with youth and adolescence

In the case of youth, the definition of this stage of life and all of the discourse associated with it functions to govern subjects based on their age. The fields of developmental science including medicine, psychiatry and psychology all frame youth as being in a stage of “becoming” where they are no longer children and have not yet become adults. As youth have not yet “become” adults they then become the subject of efforts to shape and mold them into being adults. The forces that govern youth to develop in certain ways are often based on the fear of the juvenile delinquent that acts out in ways that are dangerous, savage and unpredictable. Many social institutional forces such as the family, the education system, social services and the legal system are designed to both distract youth from engaging in “risky” or deviant behaviours and also punish and discipline youth who transgress norms and deviate from socially acceptable behaviours. On the opposite end of this binary is the framing of youth as naïve, vulnerable and in need of protection to keep them safe from danger and the risks associated with being susceptible to negative influences.

More recently, positive psychology has influenced youth work to take an approach called “positive youth development” that seeks to frame youth not as a problem or burden to be managed but as a valuable resource (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). Despite the intention to reframe youth as a benefit to society rather than as a burden, youth are still subject to governance through this

model of youth work. Many sectors of youth work use positive youth development to encourage and shape behaviour that is considered positive, healthy and moral (Fusco, 2007). The positive youth development model is also closely associated with the hyper-individualized discourse of citizenship, responsibility and accountability. Similar to the aims of social service agencies and programs that developed in the Victorian era in the west, the goals of contemporary youth work are often in line with promoting the internalization of normative middle-class values.

Disciplinary power: surveillance and the gaze

Foucault (1977) provided an analysis of how disciplinary power functions to punish or correct behaviour that does not adhere to normalized or dominantly accepted ways of being. For the subject to be governed, it must first be constructed and then made visible so that discourses can be constructed and reproduced (Foucault, 1977). Surveillance is used as a form of power that functions through the threat of being made visible, or being exposed to the gaze or view of others. Foucault proposed that simply the threat of exposure through surveillance was enough to incite self-regulation in subjects that are watched. Foucault used Jeremy Bentham's pan-opticon prison model to show how surveillance and the "gaze" of others acts as an effective and omnipresent form of disciplinary power. He describes how efficient visibility works to enlist subjects in their own discipline;

"He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he

simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection”(p. 202-203).

According to Foucault, panopticonism works to control people’s behaviour in a way that does not depend on physical force but through the self-regulation people engage in when they feel they are being watched and are under scrutiny. Young people are often monitored and made highly visible through different forms of surveillance whether it is by authority figures such as parents, teachers and police officers or security and surveillance cameras in areas frequented by youth. In the modern “governing society”, being made visible functions to construct difference and reinforce norms by “revealing” the “other” as different and undesirable.

Postmodern researchers cite the development of anthropological research as a form of surveillance that made non-western “others” visible through research and writing in a way that constructed “other” cultures or people living in poverty as backwards, primitive and even grotesque. By making “others” visible and comparing them to the dominant subject at the centre of surveillance, reinforces and legitimizes the centre as normal and as the standard for the basis of comparison to “normality”. Foucault proposed that there is a safety offered to subjects who occupy the “centre” or the space of dominant norms such as “white”, “western”, “male”, “straight” and “adult”. The subject at the centre avoids scrutiny and definition because it avoids being surveyed and can do so because it occupies the privileged space of normalcy to which all other subjects are compared.

Reconsidering Photovoice through a postmodern lens

Participation is not a neutral instrument offered to the individual but itself produces a type of individuality; it involves a specific way of governing oneself that is not “natural” or “evident” but that implies a very specific practice of freedom, a practice that has to be learned. People, in other words, have to learn to see themselves as people with individual interests and needs that have to be met and realized in a specific way. Agents involved in education geared towards participation are invited to look at themselves as active, competent, self-reflective, self-expressing, self-sufficient, communicative, social, constructive, independent, self-reliant, actively participating, problem-solving, planning experts of their own lives.

(Masschelein & Quaghebeur, 2005, p. 60)

The literature on photovoice projects identifies and reflects on the issues, barriers and potential pitfalls of the method (Drew, Duncan, & Sawyer, 2011; Strack et al., 2004; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). The majority of ethical issues or methodological problems that are raised by photovoice researchers connect to the logistics of running a successful project and are related to privacy laws, gaining permission to use photographs of community members, limited resources and access to the field to successfully recruit and engage participants. What is missing from many articles on photovoice is a discussion around power and its relationship to both the theory and practice of “voice” and representation. There is a small body of literature that addresses the issue of power in participatory visual research and community development and the limits and problems that are inherent to participatory methods

(Ballernini, 1997). Researchers from the field of international development, in which the discourse of “participation” has become popular, have also analyzed and critiqued the discourse and practice of participation using a postmodern perspective. In *Participation, the new tyranny?* (Cooke & Kothari, 2001) critics move “away from methodological revisionism that characterizes the limited self-reflexivity within participatory development and to address more directly how the discourse itself, and not just the practice, embodies the potential for an unjustified exercise of power” (p. 4). This perspective challenges the notion that methodological problems or contradictions are simply flaws that can be fixed and that methods are benign tools.

More recently, a few researchers have attempted to use photovoice to engage participants and reported and reflected on the role of stigma and surveillance that became issues in their respective projects (Packard, 2008; Prins, 2010; Walsh et al., 2008). In the following section I will review some of the critiques of participatory projects including participatory development, arts-based participatory photography and photovoice research projects. I will then review and analyze the larger body of literature on photovoice projects with youth and will focus on the contradictions and ethical issues that are presented using a postmodern lens on power and representation.

Reconsidering the subject and “voice”

Foucault’s theory of power is significant in the analysis of photovoice projects in that it questions two main assumptions, first that power it is a thing that can be held, withheld and shared. Instead, power is reconceived as a force that is embedded in a set of relationships or force relations of which everyone is apart. No one is with or without power but instead engage in power by both enacting and resisting it from

moment to moment. The second assumption is that power is only restrictive or limiting to those who are subject to it. Foucault emphasizes that power is productive in that it produces what we know and what can be known as reality. More specifically, power produces subjects as “governable”. Foucault’s theory is useful in considering how researchers and participants go beyond shifting power from one group to another to considering how the subjects of photovoice enact and resist power throughout the research process. How do photovoice projects produce researchers and participants as subjects involved in a project? What subjects are made possible? How are these subjects presented, conceived and articulated and what impact does that have on the participants of a study? The analysis of subject making and subject hood call into question the idea of “voice” by asking, “how is voice constructed” and “what voices are made possible or encouraged through different projects”? These questions help to highlight and analyze the ethical issues that arise in photovoice projects including any negative consequences or impacts that are experienced by participants.

Rethinking power in participatory development work

In their book, *Participation, the new tyranny?* Cooke and Kothari (2001) expand on issues of power and representation in their review of participatory projects in the field of international development work. Cooke and Kothari (2001) proposed that “a misunderstanding of power underpins much of the participatory discourse” (p. 14) and that consequently “the meanings ascribed to the condition of empowerment and the claims made for its attainment for those who have been marginalized must also be subjected to further scrutiny” (p. 14). The main assertion from this critique of participatory development is that power is diverse, complex, embedded in practice and

as Foucault reminds us, possibly invisible until resisted. Ironically, critics assert that participatory projects are capable of reproducing and reinforcing the very power relationships they seek to dismantle.

A key issue that is raised by the critics of participatory development work (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Mohan, 2001) is how participants are produced as subjects in the way they are identified and in the way that their experience and knowledge is viewed. Kothari (2001) outlined the many modernist binaries that participatory discourse presents and uses as a framework which includes; insider/outsider, margin/centre and local knowledge/professional knowledge. According to Kothari (2001),

these dichotomies further strengthen the assumption that people who wield power are located at institutional centres, while those who are subjugated and subjected to power are to be found at the local and regional level – hence the valorization of “local knowledge” and the continued belief in the empowerment of “local” people through participation. (p. 140)

Built into the framework of participatory methods is the assumption that local people at the micro level are powerless and need to be empowered with the help of those with or in power. Binary constructions assist in simplifying power as being with some and not with others which can overshadow the multiple and complex ways in which power plays out through everyday interactions. Kothari (2001) looked at the ways in which participatory processes and practitioners are conduits of power themselves and proposed that projects can reinforce dominant individuals or groups and reify social norms through consensus and self-surveillance. Finally, Kothari questions what the

products of or conclusions of participatory projects represent and if “what counts as “local knowledge” is very often the effect of specific kinds of techniques of power, of regulation and of normalization” (p. 152). Despite the participation of research subjects in the group process of analysis, the experience of participants may be streamlined or simplified through coding, themeing and analysis.

Who are the subjects of photovoice?

In light of the binary framework that photovoice uses, it is not a surprise that a large section of photovoice literature is made up of projects that seek to engage youth. Youth are commonly constructed as the quintessential “other” and fall neatly into the psychological development model as developing and therefore risky and at risk of acting out, misbehaving, falling under negative influence and in need of help, policing or management. In contrast, the researcher and the project facilitator is constructed as “adult” with power and privilege who sets out to engage and empower those who are less fortunate and marginalized from systems of power or power itself.

Youth as subject and photovoice as site of neo-colonialism

Artists and documentary photographers, like qualitative researchers also began to challenge their role as sole interpreter of the world around them and began to develop a form of practice that was collaborative. A participatory approach to the creation of documentary photography is present in the work of photographers John Hubbard (1991) and Wendy Ewald (2001). Hubbard began his career as a social documentary photographer who photographed homeless youth. Over time, Hubbard (1991) began to feel that the homeless youth he photographed might be interested in and capable of creating their own documentary images and in turn representing

themselves. Hubbard (1991) began to teach the homeless youth that he had photographed how to use cameras and together they published a book entitled *Shooting Back*. Ewald (2001) developed a similar program with children from various marginalized communities including children from families in the remote area of the Appalachian Mountains. Ewald (2001) focused more on the self-reflective art of self-portraiture and moves outward from self to the concept of dreams, family and community with the goal of encouraging self-reflection and visual literacy skills. Ewald's (2001) approach stems from her belief in the empowering process of story telling, she explained that her approach "grew out of an attempt to address what I saw as the need to attend to our neglected physical and visual surroundings, and the need we all feel to articulate and communicate something relevant about our personal and communal lives" (p. 8). Collaborative photography workshops between artists and marginalized groups has gained popularity since Ewald and Hubbard began their work in the 1970s and 1980s and is now used by various community and educational groups.

In a 1997 article, Julia Ballerini reviewed the publications of four prominent professional photographers who practice participatory photography with young people from marginalized communities, two of which are Hubbard and Ewald. Ballerini's article is concerned with the lack of social and political context in which young people's images are presented and the impact of context on how both youth and the adult photographer are framed. Ballerini (1997) hints at the dynamism of photography projects as a site of power in warning that "communities of children – urban adolescents run wild, or children living in remote areas of the country – are providing

new sites for ambivalent neo-colonialism” (p. 174). The implication that projects are a site of neo-colonialism draws attention to the subjects of participatory photography; who are they and how are they constructed, why do projects target them and what are project goals?

In both Hubbard and Ewald’s publications, participants are identified as impoverished youth, in need of caring, responsible adults to give them attention and guide them. The discourse of youth as vulnerable and in need and poverty stricken communities as unsafe and immoral is used by Hubbard and Ewald to describe and justify their work. Ballerini (1997) views the humanitarian efforts of these photographers as connected to the “ambivalent desires and fears that were once so much a part of colonial conquest – those longings for and terrors of the untamed and uncivilized” (p. 162). Both Hubbard and Ewald rely on a binary construction of youth and the poor as in need, wild and immature and adults as responsible, caring role models to justify the need for projects that seek to provide youth with the opportunity for personal transformation. Hubbard describes the youth in his project as living in material poverty but also “the poverty of being without loving, capable, responsible adults who teach the young right from wrong”(Ballernini, 1997, p. 165). While Ewald’s presentation and description of images by Appalachian children links to the colonial conception of the “exotic” and primitive other that is equated with childhood and romanticized as closer to nature with access to “pure” forms of creativity that are lost to adults. Finally, Ballerini (1997) looked at what the images of children in these projects become and how they function within a sign system where the viewer can occupy the space of the “un-othered” colonizer “in which the viewer’s sympathies –

and desires – can flow from a position of power, uninterrupted by any display of real threat” (p. 174) and safely objectify those who are pictured.

Transformation of the subject and self technologies

Many photovoice researchers that work with youth do so because they acknowledge that youth experiences and opinions are often ignored and undervalued. The expressed intentions of many researchers is to engage in projects that value and highlight the perspectives of youth and bring youth concerns to the attention of policy makers or other relevant authorities. Some researchers have cited the dependence of youth on those in “positions of power” as a structural or inherent limitation that photovoice does little to challenge (Ballernini, 1997; Walsh et al., 2008; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Instead, participatory research focuses on the empowerment of participants to work within structural systems to make change for themselves and their communities. However, what does empowerment mean or what does it mean to empower another? Cooke and Kothari (2001) proposed that empowerment is an abstract concept that deserves further analysis and scrutiny as the word often gets used by researchers and not by participants and is used without clear or consistent definition. Empowerment is a process that is assumed to be inherently “good” for participants and is in some cases assumed by researchers to have taken place or to have occurred through participatory projects. Within the binary framework of margin and centre and youth and adult, empowerment discourse tends to focus on the transformation of the “powerless” subject. Triantafillou & Nielsen (2001) proposed that the process of empowerment in many participatory action research projects is a form of what Foucault called “self-technologies” (1977) that assist in the governing

and shaping of subjects who internalize dominant norms and police themselves through self surveillance, self awareness and reflection.

Critical reflection on self, others and community

Transformation is often intended or encouraged through individual reflection through guided assignments, the posing of certain research questions and taking and then discussing photographs of particular experiences or identified issues and assets. Do the techniques used in photovoice assist in teaching participants to see themselves, others and the world around them in a particular way and then also how to articulate those views in a particular way? There is an interesting trend in the youth photovoice literature where researchers question the ability of youth to fully grasp the abstract concepts involved in critical reflection and conceptual thinking and cite this perceived inability as a barrier to successfully engaging youth (Drew et al., 2011; Findholt, Michael, & Davis, 2010; Royce et al., 2006; Strack et al., 2004; Wilson et al., 2007). In one example, Royce et al. (2006) proposed that, “the photovoice assignment required conceptual thinking and introspection on behalf of the youth and some youth may not have been cognitively developed to fully comprehend the abstract assignment to photograph an intangible idea (youth empowerment)” (p. 85). In other examples, researchers discussed youth as being in a state of psychological development where critical thinking and individual introspection is beginning to take place but has not fully formed (Drew et al., 2011; Strack et al., 2004; Wilson et al., 2007). Framing youth as not yet capable of understanding reflection and abstract thought points to the idea that thinking and analyzing in specific ways are taught or learned.

The tools and techniques of reflection

The techniques used in photovoice are viewed as useful in helping youth to become self aware through self-reflection and in teaching youth how to view themselves in relation to their community. Strack et al. (2004) discuss how “photovoice can be used as a great tool for enhancing identify formation...taking pictures of family, friends, and community allows youth to reflect on who they are and who they want to be” (p. 56). Specifically the SHOWED method of inquiry outlined at the beginning of this chapter outlines a specific way of reflecting on images and assists participants in thinking about and talking about their experiences and their communities in terms of identifying and solving issues or problems. The intention behind having participants take photos is to keep them in the “drivers seat” in terms of dictating the focus and agenda of a project (Chio & Fandt, 2007; Wang & Burris, 1997), however the framework in which the content of photos is analyzed is introduced and guided by researchers and the photovoice method of analysis. Despite the expressed goal of photovoice and participatory methods to allow participants to have control over the research questions and project agenda and goals, there are many instances where researchers use language that implies that ways of seeing, knowing and expressing are taught to participants (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006; Royce et al., 2006; Side, 2005). For instance, Royce et al. (2006) discuss the training and guidance provided to youth by facilitators intended to help youth how to “look”, “think” and “act” in new ways and in line with project goals.

Critical perspectives and the making of citizens

The benefits of youth seeing themselves in new ways and in relation to others is associated with understanding the context and meaning behind the social conditions of community issues and assets (Wilson et al., 2007). In line with the goals of PAR projects and the Friearian principles of critical literacy, the results of this new critical perspective are intended to lead to social action and positive social change. In youth projects social action is often equated with “becoming responsible”, citizenship and increased civic engagement (Gant et al., 2009) and engaging in acts of community service such as cleaning up garbage (Strack et al., 2004), promoting healthy lifestyles (Royce et al., 2006), conducting safety watches (Wilson et al., 2007) and beautification projects (Walsh et al., 2008; Cottrell, 2005 as cited in Wang, 2006). The final stage of photovoice projects is typically an exhibition of participant narratives and images to an intended audience, often times policy makers. In one exhibition, the images used were intended to counter the negative stereotypes of youth as lazy and “at risk” with images of youth engaging in acts of civic responsibility. Royce et al. (2006) reported that youth “wanted to begin curbing the negative images many community members have of youth as liabilities...with photographs of diverse youth participating in community service activities and being responsible and productive citizens” (p. 85).

Developing skills and becoming adults

Photovoice researchers also associate empowerment with the development of certain skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and professional presentation and communication skills. Positive changes in attitudes and behaviours are referred to in youth photovoice projects as increased social competence, sense of morality and

sense of responsibility or civic duty that leads to action (Wilson et al., 2007, Royce et al, 2006, Strack et al., 2004). When participants are youth, empowerment may be connected to the training of youth to become successful, responsible adults that have learned the skills necessary to be granted entry into socially acceptable systems of institutional power. Similar to Ewald and Hubbard's emphasis on the need for responsible adult role-models in the lives of poor and marginalized youth, Strack et al. (2004) associate the empowerment of youth with growing up and having access to adults in positions of power;

“adults involved in the project must find the avenues by which youth can express these opinions to influential adults. Remember that photovoice is a process. Persons do not achieve full empowerment during adolescence, but it is a time of life when the process should begin and develop. Assistance from adults is needed to launch the process” (p. 56)

The implication that youth are not capable of being fully empowered until they are adults reinforces youth as an underdeveloped “other” in need of guidance. In another example, Wang & Redwood Jones (2001) talk about the importance of teaching participants “powerful and credible skills” (p. 569) that are necessary in order to reach and appear credible to policy makers. Is it possible that photovoice projects attempt to teach youth and other marginalized groups how to think, act and speak in ways that are acceptable to dominant groups? Is the productive power of photovoice the transformation of participants into “credible subjects”, ones that learn to see themselves in particular ways and internalize the norms that are necessary to be taken seriously by adults and by those in the “centre”?

The double edged sword of representation – benefits and risks

I have discussed above the possible ways in which power plays out in the process of photovoice and will now turn to the products of that process or the representation of the knowledge it produces. Photovoice deals specifically with representation as an act of power that researchers seek to democratize and make available to participants. Caroline Wang (1999; 2001) cites social documentary photography and feminist thought as underpinning the goal of participatory representation or self-representation in photovoice. Social documentary photography is credited with making visible the stories of those who are forgotten or ignored and with inciting change in social conditions by shedding light on issues. Feminist methodologies focus on uncovering, valuing and sharing the subjugated knowledge of women in an effort to recognize “the significance of women’s experience” (Wang, 1999, p. 186).

Environmental researcher, Deborah Barndt (2001) uses a process of collaborative story production that is similar to photovoice in her research with groups who are typically spoken for; immigrant women, labour activists, and Native Friendship Centres. Barndt (2001) has described the collective production process of photo-story books as a three-step process: naming, making and connecting. Barndt (2001) has spoken to the political nature and democratic power of public storytelling; “Naming ourselves and our world is a basic power, essential to our capacity to be a subject of history and not objects or victims...telling our own stories affirms our power to write our own histories” (p. 46).

In Wang and Barndt's conception of self-representation the focus is on self-determination and the benefits and value of being included and counted. Participatory representation is intended to be empowering for subjects through having control over the tools of representation and liberating in that their stories and experiences will be included and valued in popular discourse and policy. The problem with the visibility that representation affords is that it does not always or only lead to positive experiences and outcomes.

This limits of representation and the risk of stigma are evident in Walsh et al.'s (2008) study run at a youth program in Calgary, Alberta in a neighbourhood characterized as "highly vulnerable community fraught with infrastructure problems, deflated property values and a host of social issues" (p. 380). The Boys and Girls Club involved in the project was interested in promoting community development and increasing leadership capacity in youth while researchers were interested in finding "effective solutions for the social dimensions of the built environment" (Walsh et al., 2008, p. 381). After photographing community issues and assets, the youth decided on an action project of creating painted garbage cans to deal with and spread awareness of graffiti and litter in the neighbourhood. Researchers then questioned if the project "made the participants more aware of disadvantages or problems in their community" and if "the research provided a heightened sense of neighbourhood disadvantage" (Walsh et al., 2008, p. 387).

Further, one participant "questioned the agenda of his neighbourhood needing to be fixed and identified that while commonly held perceptions of the community were negative, other communities had similar problems and their community

shouldn't be singled out" (Walsh et al., 2008, p. 386). Another participant opted out of being photographed or speaking with media that covered the project exhibition of images "for fear that he would be stigmatized" (Walsh et al., 2008, p. 387). Finally, participants concerns were confirmed when "attention given by the media was spun in a manner that described "at risk" youth from an "impoverished" community participating in something positive, essentially further stigmatizing, or utilizing community stereotypes" (Walsh et al., 2008, p. 386). Representation can be a double-edged sword; while it may result in inclusion it may also result in surveillance and scrutiny. Research subjects may both enjoy and lament the visibility that they experience as a result of representation as it can lead to both inclusion and being counted as well as surveillance and being watched, analyzed and judged.

Chapter 3: Postmodern Ethnography and Decolonizing Methods

"People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does." (Foucault cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 187)

In this chapter, I present two approaches to working and doing research with others that influenced my approach to the emerging process of research and data analysis: a decolonizing approach to working with youth, and the concepts and strategies of postmodern ethnography. The literature on youth work became increasingly relevant to deconstructing my role and interactions with youth for a few reasons. First, even though I approached the youth as a researcher, the youth viewed me as a youth worker who was attempting to engage them in a recreation activity or community project, and who opened up the youth centre for them to hang out in. Second, a decolonizing framework that seeks to dismantle youth/adult binaries is useful in deconstructing any interaction between adults and youth. The literature on postmodern ethnography became more relevant as the project shifted away from attempting a modified version of photovoice and towards an examination of power and process in working with youth.

Decolonizing youth work and research with youth

A decolonizing framework on youth work was useful in this project as it similarly considers how power is produced in adult-youth interactions and the framework of youth work. Rather than view youth work as inherently “good” for youth, a decolonizing framework looks more closely at the ways that youth work extends the colonial project of making visible, defining and producing “others” as

different from what is “normal” (white, male, western, adult). In order to decolonize youth work, Skott Myhre proposed (2006) we must “cease attempting to dominate and control young people” (p.219) in order to break away from the disciplinary power apparatus that plagues relationships between youth and adults. In order to do this, we need to consider, the role of “adult” subjectivity in the construction of youth-adult binaries, the privilege of “adult” status and the safety and invisibility that position affords, and to view or understand youth work as an ongoing process of human interaction and possibility.

Acknowledging privilege and challenging youth-adult binaries

The call to decolonize youth work asks adults to consider how they are constructed as superior to youth and how that construction functions to justify the subordination and control of youth. This requires youth workers to acknowledge that “adult” is a construction, and not an innate or natural state that exists outside of youth, but is instead dependent on and co-constructed through the definition of youth as different. Deconstructing the binary of youth and adult assists in identifying and deconstructing “the disciplinary apparatus that produces both adult and youth forms of subjectivity” (p. 177). Dismantling binary modernist constructions like youth and adult, male and female, east and west, margin and centre is also different from attempting to reverse the power differential of that binary. In participatory projects like photovoice the focus is on reversing power differentials between binaries, for example teaching youth or allowing youth to take up positions and engage in actions that mimic adult roles and responsibilities. A step towards dismantling binaries is to recognize that “self” and “other” are categories that are mutually constitutive and

dependent on one another for definition (Said, 1978). For an adult to challenge the definition of “youth,” they must also challenge what it means to be “adult” and in doing so prepare to “be radically altered as an “adult” through interaction with youth” (Skott-Myhre, 2008, p. 138). It is in this meeting and engagement with the other in this “collision of subjectivity” (Skott-Myhre, 2008, p. 99) where the possibility of redefining or altering of “self” and “other” takes place. Youth workers and researchers who want to decolonize how they engage and work with youth need to reconsider themselves as “adults” and allow that construction to change through their interactions and experience with youth.

De-centering adulthood and making the self visible

In the previous chapter, I outlined Foucault’s theory of disciplinary power that functions to discipline youth through surveillance. Disciplinary power depends on making “others” visible and available as objects to be studied, critiqued, reprimanded and corrected. Research makes participants visible, through the observation, analysis and writing up of experience and behaviour. Disciplinary youth work functions in a similar way by making youth visible through identification, observation and assessment. In contrast, adults (researchers and youth workers) occupy a space of safety from which surveillance and observation flows in the direction of others and away from self. According to Skott-Myhre (2009), this process not only makes the subjugation of others possible, it hides adults from themselves and obscures “our own history of loss, our own neglected local knowledge” and “histories of subjugation as adults” (p.228). Despite the safety of being located in the “centre”, adults are as limited and confined as youth by subjectivity. However, adults have a responsibility to

acknowledge their privilege and take the risk of becoming visible in youth work in an effort to dismantle what it means to be “youth” and “adult”. In youth work, a decolonizing framework requires workers to explore self, self in youth work and the “entire construct of adulthood”(p. 228). In de-centering adulthood, youth workers may be able to connect with youth through a different set of relations or identities.

Youth work as process and self in motion

A postmodern perspective emphasizes working with youth as a process where self and other interacts, rather than as a means to produce or transform youth as a product. Mark Krueger (2007), a youth worker and researcher emphasizes the importance of movement and process in his exploration of self and youth work. In his book, *Sketching youth, self, and youth work*, Kreuger (2007) talks about his interest in “the self as is manifest in interactions between youth workers and youth, and/or the history of youth that workers bring to these moments that helps them know and understand what they are doing” (p. 16). Krueger (2007) views youth work as “a process of self in action” where self is used as a resource by workers “to inform and be in their interactions” with youth (p. 40). Krueger compares youth work to a dance that may be choreographed or planned, but also something that changes and is improvised during its performance and in the moment with others. Krueger (2007) also talks about missteps in the dance with youth and that “sometimes your improvisations are slightly off. Despite your best effort you are out of synch with the youth. So you try again, learning from your experience” (p. 52). Youth work is framed as an action or way of being where self is present, engaged, curious, responsive and open to learning from and with youth. Effective youth work strives for moments of connection where

workers and youth make new meanings out of shared lived experience. Both Krueger (2007) and Skott-Myhre (2008) emphasize the possibility of moments in action and interaction between adults and youth where subjectivities collide and a new set of relations is made possible. Krueger's portrait of youth work is focused on the process and possibilities of being with and sharing experience with youth in a meaningful way, rather than the product of or end goals of this process.

Postmodern Ethnography

Postmodern ethnography also influenced this study, particularly the perspective that postmodern ethnography holds on the question of representation. According to postmodernists, meaning is thought to be constructed, subjective, changing and fluid, representation is a problem because it turns what is represented (an experience, a conversation, an event) into an object that can be clearly identified, referred to, and categorized. Many postmodern thinkers have proposed that the act of representation is not a neutral or benign one and that instead is an act of power that names, defines and fixes meaning. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1988) explained that "anthropologists have had added to their 'is it decent?' worry (Who are we to describe them?) an 'is it possible?' one" (p. 135). In a sense representation cannot do what it claims to be able to because it will always simplify, reduce, and inevitably leave something out.

Postmodern ethnographers have abandoned the modernist goal of "telling it like it is" and instead attempt to acknowledge and make visible the subjective nature of lived experience of both the researcher and the participant. The meaning of "reality" or "truth" as knowable is replaced with meaning as fluid, changing and co-

produced by researchers and participants throughout the research process. Instead of viewing data or results as accurate findings, they are instead viewed as a discourse or set of discourses that carry multiple and varied meanings. Rather than re-present, postmodernists seek to avoid representation by evoking and encouraging multiple readings of research results, which opens up meaning rather than closing it down.

There are three key ideas that translate into strategies for engaging in postmodern research and they are; 1) the concept of discourse, 2) researcher reflexivity and making the self/researcher visible, 3) polyvocality and collaboration. These key ideas are considered at every stage of the research process including the guiding purpose of a research project, the design and method of the project or the process and the analysis and presentation of the research text.

Discourse

In its literal sense, discourse refers to the words we use to communicate or the linguistic text that is created through speaking and writing. In a broader sense postmodernists conceive discourse as the process of meaning making and as a form of social action that does something. Postmodernists propose that language is not a neutral, transparent tool or mirror and is instead active in constructing, shaping and producing social reality. In postmodern research, the purpose, process, and presentation of research is reconsidered based on the redefinition of truth or truths as “discourse”. Postmodernism questions the existence of a single, objective reality as well as the representational strategies that are used to reflect it. Representational practices, like language are reconceived as tools that assist in the construction of reality. Rather than seeking to represent truth or determine what the truth is,

postmodern researchers are interested in “studying the process of construction itself, how “truths” emerge, how social realities and identities are built and the consequences of these, than working out what “really happened”” (Wetherell, 2001, p. 16). Viewing representational practices as powerful and active in constructing reality helps researchers focus on the process of meaning making rather than closing down or pointing to one meaning or another as superior or “true”. Rather than attempting to report on truth, postmodern research seeks to deconstruct how meaning is made and how meaning comes to be regarded as truth. Lather (2001b) explains that through focusing on the structure of meaning production, “ethnography becomes a kind of self-wounding laboratory for discovering the rules by which truth is produced” (p. 202). Conceiving all forms of representation throughout the research process (field note descriptions, researcher reflections, interview transcripts, photographs) as a form of discourse also allows the researcher to reflect on how discourse functions in their own articulations, analysis, and writing of what happened in the field. Reflexivity then plays a key role in helping postmodern researchers to deconstruct their own discourse or meaning making work as well as the discourse of their participants, or those who are encountered in the field.

Reflexivity and visibility

Researchers have traditionally presented themselves as invisible in the research process, or are only present in research texts as “the voice from nowhere” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 123). However, in postmodern ethnography the researcher is not considered to be separate from the “object of inquiry.” Clair (2003) explains that “ethnography necessarily implicates the ethnographer in the creation of an expression

of who and what a culture is all about (Clair, 1998). It concomitantly describes the ethnographer as s/he describes the Other” (p. 19). Postmodern ethnographies are characterized by researcher reflexivity and ethnographic writing is typically presented with an authorial self-consciousness, which helps to position the author as both researcher and participant in the research experience. Reflexivity has been defined as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the “human as instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1981)...it is the conscious experiencing of self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner as the one coming to know the self within the process of research itself” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 124).

Many researchers strive to create research texts that make the researcher visible in their accounts of the other through reflexive writing and analysis of their experience (Ellis, 2004; Krueger, 2007; Skott-Myhre, 2006; Visweswaran, 1994), as well as create spaces for voices other than their own (Lather, 2001b). When the researcher encounters the other and describes and analyzes the experience of the other, it is not only for the purpose of understanding the experience of others, but for understanding yourself through your encounter with your participants (Richardson, 1994). Rather than the researcher reporting on the experience of participants, the research experience itself is a co-production of social reality that is not mutually exclusive to either party (Richardson, 1994; Tyler, 1986). Researcher reflections on their own subjective experiences and changing viewpoints throughout the research process is both a strategy to deconstruct meaning and also a response to the ethical question of participant versus researcher visibility.

Research as collaborative and polyvocality

Many critical and feminist ethnographers have advocated for research that makes room for the voices of those who have been missing from academic discourse (Barndt, 2001; Sanger, 2003) Smith (1997), Hill Collins (1990). As researchers are stepping back from providing a monologue of their viewpoint on others, there has been a push towards creating opportunities for participants to speak about their own experience without the authoritative interference of the researcher (Lather, 2001a). Some have argued that there is a political and ethical imperative to let participants speak for themselves, while others have argued that this worry can result in a return to the modernist goals of scientific accuracy and realism. The inclusion of multiple voices and experiences in postmodern research is seen as consistent with postmodernism because it assists in complicating “regimes of truth”. In light of the concern of returning to the modernist goals of realism or essentialism, the goal in postmodern ethnography may be to seek out the multiple and sometimes silenced perspectives of others while also acting ethically in not representing these perspectives in a way that closes down meaning and defines them.

In the spirit of avoiding representations that essentialize others, polyvocality has also been framed as a way to present multiple voices in a way that does not lead to a single reading of experience. Sanger (2003) explains that;

Polyvocality refers to the possibility of allowing for many voices, rather than simply that of the researcher, to speak in ethnographic texts. For many feminist scholars, polyvocality is more than a textual strategy; it is a perspective that guides praxis. It speaks to the relationship between the knower and the known

in the issues of dialogue and trust; to the power and the “right” one has to speak for and about another; the ways in which a text might serve to objectify (or not) the voices, lives, and experiences of those involved in the research; and the potential that reflexivity has for encouraging polyvocality. (pp. 37-38)

Polyvocality may take place in more than one way in postmodern research, first in that it acknowledges the varied and multiple experiences of others and second in that it does not represent those experiences in a way that essentializes or defines them.

Postmodern ethnography also differs from traditional ethnography in that it is viewed as a collaborative event or undertaking between the researcher and the participants in the study. Tyler (1986) described the relationship between researcher and participant as collaborative in terms of creating research as a discourse that emerges as a result from their interactions in the field. Tyler goes on to specify that “questions of form are not prior, the form itself should emerge out of the joint work of the ethnographer and his native partners” (Tyler, 1986, p. 127). The form or structure of a study then is often emergent in nature in that it does not take on a pre-determined form.

Accessing the Research Setting and Recruiting Participants

This study took place at a drop-in after-school program at a local youth centre. The youth centre is located in a community-housing unit at the Dovercourt housing project in a small city in Ontario. The after-school drop-in program serves youth between the ages of 12 and 18 and is run by a local youth serving agency and is funded by the United Way. The objective of this program is to engage youth in the local area in physical activity and games, creative projects, and to offer homework support. The photovoice workshops took place at they youth centre and also served as

a meeting space for the researcher and the participants throughout the course of the study.

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) recommend a “mapping tour” in entering the field, which allows the researcher to get familiar with the spatial, social and temporal aspects of the research environment. I began my mapping tour of Dovercourt by volunteering at the evening programs at the centre. I visited the youth centre frequently so that I could become familiar with the neighbourhood, the youth workers, and the schedule of events, as well as begin to develop relationships with the youth that live in the complex. I volunteered to help during the teen program drop in hours from 6-8:30pm on four evenings in late May and early June of 2009. These early visits also helped facilitate participant recruitment efforts.

Many photovoice projects recruit interested research participants by presenting the concept behind photovoice and the project goals to the community in question, either through in person presentations, or through flyers or advertisements (Carlson et al., 2006; Moffitt & Vollman, 2004; Strack et al., 2004; Wilson et al., 2007). I actively recruited participants through direct contact with the youth, the youth workers and through posted notices explaining the project and its goals (recruitment poster attached as Appendix A). I recruited in person by talking with youth who expressed interest in photography to me or the other workers about the goals of the project and details about the workshops and handed out information sheets on the photovoice and the workshop schedule (attached as Appendix B and Appendix C).

Recent photovoice and participatory photography projects show that the number of participants in a project can vary from four to 60 people, however typically

an individual workshop breaks down to a manageable size of five to ten people (Aitchison, 1999; Cook & Hess, 2007; Royce et al., 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). As the workshop sessions in photovoice focus on instruction and then open discussion, a smaller group helps to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to contribute and share their ideas. A total of nine youth that visited the centre on a regular basis and lived in the apartment complex consented to participate in the study (consent form attached as Appendix D). Out of this group, six were female and were between the ages of 12 and 18 and three were male between the ages of 12 and 17. The families of six out of the eight participants had emigrated from the Sudan, and the families of two had emigrated from Tanzania. All of the youth identified as being members of newcomer families and as Muslim. On average the youth had lived at Dovercourt for four to six years. The female participants were all very good friends who played or hung out together regularly, and two sets of girls were sisters. The two male participants were also good friends with each other and with the female participants in the study.

The photovoice workshops: emerging concerns and methodological changes

As described in Chapter Two, the photovoice method follows a workshop schedule and process that is based on the three common stages of documentation, reflection and presentation. However, a review of the literature on photovoice research projects shows that the number of workshops (anywhere from 3-25 workshop meetings) and the time frame in which workshops take place (2 weeks to 5 months) can vary depending on the context of the project, and the time constraints of both researchers and participants. In the studies of using photovoice with marginalized

groups, the number of workshops tended to be lower. For example, in their study with homeless adults Cash, Wang and Powers (2000) held three four-hour workshops over a one-month period with eleven participants. As their participants did not live in a stable consistent location, they felt that fewer workshops over a shorter period of time helped to “maintain contact with, and generate enthusiasm among, participants who lead itinerant lives” (Wang et al., 2000, p. 83). I originally planned a workshop schedule that consisted of five three-hour sessions to take place within four to five weeks. I planned to hold all of the workshops in a meeting room at the youth centre.

The original photovoice workshop plan that was scheduled and the meetings and exchanges that took actually took place throughout this study were very different. These changes to the workshop schedule and workshop activities was a result of the ongoing shift in working from a modernist framework, where photovoice is framed as a tool for emancipation, to a postmodernist framework, where the ethical issues that emerge in the research process are foregrounded. At the outset of this project I was influenced by the ethical issues raised in critiques of participatory projects and sought to prevent these same issues from occurring in my photovoice project with youth. Specifically, I was concerned with reproducing the power dynamics between adults and youth by using photovoice to “set youth on the right path” or by viewing youth as a problem to be fixed. I was also concerned with the impact that public exhibition had on participants in terms of identifying participants as somehow disadvantaged or marginalized and therefore stigmatizing them. I set out to deal with these issues by revising traditional photovoice in the following ways: by engaging in ongoing reflection on my role as the researcher throughout the project; by attempting to

balance my research goals with the goals of participants, and by considering and discussing the risks that accompany public exhibition and leaving this step of the photovoice method as optional.

Role of the researcher and reflective journaling

Participatory methods aim to challenge the hierarchy inherent between the roles of the researcher and the researched. Photovoice specifically invites participants to be co-researchers in a study, by asking them to investigate and document their experiences within their communities. Kemmis and McTaggart (2008) have proposed that it is important to acknowledge in participatory forms of research that aim to level the playing field between researcher and subject, that the role of the researcher is never neutral. As a researcher, it is also important to acknowledge and unpack one's privilege and position of power. Just as modernist qualitative researchers are encouraged to acknowledge and confront their bias, a researcher using participatory methods are encouraged to acknowledge and confront their position of power as an academic and as the primary researcher. As a researcher working with youth, I also needed to acknowledge that I enjoy adult privilege and need to be conscious and wary of exercising this privilege throughout the research project.

As the primary researcher and facilitator of the participatory photography workshops, I engaged in reflective journaling regarding my role in the research process and my impact on the discussion and direction of inquiry. Throughout the project, I wrote on my experience conducting the workshops, my role as a facilitator, and my thoughts and feelings on the discussion and the progress of the group. Descriptive and reflective notes were written immediately following my visits to the

centre and my meetings with youth and the individual and partner interviews.

Sometimes I would write about my experiences at the centre at other points after mulling over or discussing my experiences with others. These reflections allowed me to acknowledge and work through my own perception of the issues that arose and how my presence in the workshops affected the data that was produced and the direction of the project.

Balancing researcher and participant goals

It was my intention for project goals to be clearly discussed, considered and defined in order for the project to be both transparent and participatory. As a researcher I attempted to meet my own goals of addressing my research questions while also maintaining an open format that allowed participants to set their own agenda when it came to the content of assignments and discussion. In this study, photovoice assignments were designed to address the research questions of the study but also to be open-ended so that participants are able to retain control over the content of their images.

In Caroline Wang's definition of photovoice, the final step of a project is to communicate a message or story from participants to a specific audience, often people in positions of authority, decision makers or policy makers. In order for this project to be youth driven and "participatory", it was important for me to ask if communicating with policy makers was relevant goal for youth? And if it was a relevant goal, to be sure that youth (and not me) would be in control of this step of the process by determining whom a potential audience of an exhibit might be.

In Barndt's (2001) definition of the photovoice method, she describes a slightly different purpose of participatory visual research in that the goal is to name, make and connect for the purpose of democratic storytelling. Barndt proposed that the act of storytelling is an act of power, and through photovoice this act is used for the purpose of creating democratic dialogue and discussion, but without the explicit goal of influencing others in positions of power. In a postmodern version of photovoice, perhaps the goal or aim of a project would be to create dialogue and discussion between participants and not to communicate with others outside the group.

Representation optional - weighing the risks of representation

Overall, my concern was to make sure that I did not impose a specific goal for research participants. As a researcher I did not want to claim to empower, but instead elicit stories and discussion from youth. As a researcher or facilitator of this project I did not claim to give voice or even to be creating a platform for participant's voice. However I was asking participants to tell their story and share their experience through photography and group discussion. Due to the reported risks associated with public presentation and exhibition, I felt that to postmodernize photovoice, the third goal of Wang's method, to exhibit and present stories needed to be optional. If participants expressed an interest in exhibiting their work, we would explore the possibilities of presentation either as a group or individually.

Data Collection

Descriptive and Reflective Field Notes

Descriptive field notes were recorded immediately following each photovoice workshop. These field notes focused on documenting the content of the discussion that

takes place during each session. Schatzman & Strauss (1973) proposed that field observations can be categorized into one of three packages of material based on their content. The first category is “observational notes” and these notes contain the description of discussion that took place during the session. The second category is “methodological notes” contains the thoughts and observations made on the process and logistics of the session. The third category, “theoretical notes” contains ideas or reflections of the researcher on the themes and issues that emerged throughout the session.

The observational notes assisted in documenting the verbal presentation of visual images by each participant and the exchanges that took place between participants and the researcher at each meeting or session. Descriptive field notes focused on the content of discussion will mainly consist of key words and phrases that are used by participants throughout the workshop. Following the workshop, these notes were elaborated on and then typed up by the researcher in an effort to re-create the dialogue of the workshop or meeting. At this point, I also began to make theoretical notes and began to engage in the beginnings of data analysis by adding any theoretical ideas or concepts that came to mind as the session was recalled, recorded and reflected upon. Finally, I reflected on the photovoice process, the logistics of the session, the level of participation and interest of the youth in our workshop meetings. Questions that I grappled with through making methodological notes included: How did the session run? Did participants seem engaged? Is the photovoice process helping to illicit rich narratives and data? In total 68 pages of typed notes were collected that

detailed 29 events (formal meetings, casual meetings and interviews) over the course of approximately three months (late May to mid August, 2009).

Individual Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant at the conclusion of the workshop series. The purpose of the individual and in some cases small group interviews was twofold. First, the interview allowed the participants a final opportunity to elaborate on the photographs that they have produced, and potentially share any information they felt they could not share in larger group. Three participants opted to conduct their interview one on one and the remaining six chose to interview in smaller groups where they felt comfortable talking. Second, the interview allowed for an opportunity to learn more about their experience of participating in the project and also to discuss participant viewpoints on the possibility of doing an exhibition.

Instead of conducting the interviews in an indoor space, many of the interviews were conducted as “go-alongs.” The go-along interview is dynamic in that it allows both the researcher and the participant to conduct the interview outside of the traditional interview environment (Kusenbach, 2003). The go-along interview allows the interviewee to control the setting and context of the interview and is a method well suited for research questions connected to the experience of space, as they can take place in context. Some participants opted to interview indoors, while others chose to sit in different places and move around depending on what they wanted to talk about or where they felt comfortable. Like photovoice, the semi-structured, go-along interview seeks to break down the barrier between the researcher and the researched

by giving the subject the ability to take control over the physical and conceptual direction of the interview (Kusenbach, 2003). In this study, participants were able to take the researcher to the leisure spaces that they used to discuss further their experience in that space. The researcher also brought along to the interview copies of the photographs that were taken by the participant to discuss further. The interview guide is included as Appendix E. A total of 8 interviews with individual and sometimes small groups of participants were conducted and recorded using a digital recorder. In addition, one impromptu focus group-style discussion in which 8 participants were present was recorded and is featured in Chapter 6.

Data Analysis

The data analysis approach used in this study reflects my interest in understanding how power plays out and functions through the practice of working with others, specifically working with youth using the participatory method of photovoice. To this end, I employed Foucault's theory on disciplinary power and governmentality as a lens to analyze data in terms of how youth may be governed through youth work and interactions between youth and youth workers as well as how my own interactions with youth may have relied on or embodied disciplinary power.

However, I am also interested in understanding how as a researcher and as an adult I could move away from a modernist structure that creates the binary definition of researcher and participant and adult and youth and towards a postmodern, decolonizing framework. For the purpose of analyzing instances in the project where photovoice "failed" to happen and instead different interactions took place, I used Skott-Myhre's theory on decolonizing youth work and Krueger's writing on the

“dance” of youth work in an effort to understand and make sense of possible “moments of connection”. The data generated through this study includes observational field notes, reflective notes, one transcribed group discussion with all participants and transcribed individual and small group interviews with participants.

First, in order to analyze power, it is necessary to identify and analyze points of resistance throughout the project, where I did not successfully “engage” youth, where youth were not interested in participating in the way that I thought they might and where youth reacted negatively towards different aspects or steps of the photovoice process. It is in these moments of resistance, that Foucault (1978) claims, power becomes visible, and is also where analysis can begin to consider what productive forces may be at work. An analysis of and reflection on the many moments of resistance throughout the study assists in understanding how photovoice as a process does not exist outside of power relations and may also be a force that produces youth or the narratives of youth in ways that they may have resisted.

Analysis tool #1: Power and governmentality

Foucault (1994) suggests using the following categories to assist in analyzing power in terms of how subjects are; constructed through discourse and differentiation, subjected to acts of power through specific objectives and then subject to instruments used to enforce or follow through with objectives. I used these categories to assist in analyzing a set of observational field notes and reflective notes taken during my first four visits to the youth centre during scheduled programming offered at the centre. Additional questions that assisted in analyzing the data included: How are “subjects” defined or framed through discourse at the local level (by youth workers or by the

youth)? If power is productive, what or who is produced through the interactions that take place during programming?

I asked similar questions of myself as a researcher in my analysis of observational and reflective field notes taken through the photovoice workshop schedule as I did of the literature on photovoice previous photovoice research. In my facilitation of photovoice did I attempt to produce youth as subjects in a particular way? What was the reaction of youth to these efforts? What subjects were made possible through photovoice and why? What subjects were not made possible or ignored?

Analysis tool #2: Deconstructing the self/other binary within the “dance of youth work”

My initial analysis of the data focused on identifying and analyzing power and resistance as well as my potential role in relying on or engaging in disciplinary forms of power relations with youth. In these moments adult/youth binaries were constructed and enforced. I then looked back at my observational and reflective field notes and attempted to make sense of my experience from a decolonizing perspective. Am I able to identify any moments when the adult/youth binary break down and if so, how and what was the effect? Further, was I able to de-centre my position of “adulthood” as Skott-Myhre suggests, by stepping out of the safety zone of invisibility? Finally, Krueger’s writing on the “dance of youth work” assisted in exploring what happened when I let go of “objectives” and the structure of a photovoice project. When the structure of photovoice was abandoned, what was allowed to happen? Is that when moments of connections emerged?

Narrowing down “the story”

To narrow in on the story of what I consider to be key moments or stories of what happened when I entered the field, spent time at the youth centre, engaged in youth work and got to know the youth I paid attention to what I felt were “moments of resistance” (Foucault, 1977) and also “moments of connection” (Krueger, 2007). I have identified these key moments or shifts as an embodied researcher and youth worker where I watched, participated in, responded to and initiated interactions with youth and felt an emotional reaction to what was happening. Throughout the project I was preoccupied with the balancing of two aims which often came into conflict with each other: 1) successfully engaging youth in some version of photovoice and 2) respecting the right of youth to participate on their own terms.

Overall, I have organized the data into sections that represent different phases of the project that I feel signify shifts in my thinking about how I should work with youth or where my interactions with or behaviour toward youth changed. These moments include; watching and interpreting youth work at the centre, attempting to engage youth in photovoice workshops, youth resisting different aspects of the photovoice process, hanging out and interacting with youth, and learning about why the youth might not want to identify and reveal themselves in certain ways. Finally this story is written from my perspective, which is perhaps ironic considering the goal of a participatory project is to elicit multiple narratives from the perspective of participants. However, what I hope becomes clear to the reader is that it seemed appropriate to turn the lens of inquiry back on myself in an attempt to make myself visible (Skott-Myhre, 2006) and in order to deconstruct my role as a researcher

learning how to engage “the other”.

Chapter 4: Watching youth work and looking for sites of power

In the following chapter I attempt to analyze some of my experiences in the field with youth and youth workers that took place at the outset of this project. These field experiences in the early to mid stages of data collection helped form my early impressions of the relationships and dynamics between the youth and the youth workers at the centre and also between the youth themselves. Foucault (1977) proposed that “power is tolerable only when it masks a significant portion of itself” and that it becomes visible at the points in which it is resisted. During the time that I spent at the youth centre there were many examples where youth resisted the actions or strategies used by the youth workers to control or shape the behaviour of youth. These altercations or points of resistance between workers and youth often resulted in conflict and anger or disappointment and frustration for the workers and for the youth.

I will focus on four site visits that I made to the centre during teen drop in hours throughout the last month of programming in June, 2009. I will draw on the description in my field notes which include; one evening at the centre during teen drop in hours, two community development meetings that are attended by many of the teens in the program and a field trip to a screening of videos made by the youth. My analysis was influenced by questions that arose from considering Foucault’s (1977, 1978) theory of disciplinary power, specifically considering the following three questions; 1) how are “subjects” defined or framed through discourse at a local level and 2) if power is productive, what or whom is produced through the interactions and actions of youth and youth workers? 3) what tactics or strategies are used to enforce the production of subjects and certain behaviours?

A number of discourses emerged from the social interactions and conversations that took place that defined both youth and adults in a way that “othered” youth and legitimized the authority and actions of adults. Youth are framed as wild, messy and in need of regulation and control and adults are framed as responsible authorities whose job it is to model and encourage youth how to internalize certain values and behaviours. The values and behaviours that were encouraged in youth were being responsible, respecting authority, respecting each other, behaving properly, following the rules and finally showing gratitude for the programming that was offered or presented to youth. The following stories are based on description from my field notes that were taken during my volunteer hours at the youth centre and a few of my initial visits to the centre where I was recruiting participants to participate in photovoice.

An evening at the drop in centre

Field note, Wed, May 27, 2009

During one of my initial visits to the centre an interesting scene unfolded during the teen group drop-in hours just outside the community unit where the program is run. I had stopped by to hang out for the evening and to give out information on the photovoice project. It was warm out and there were lots of kids playing outside in the common area outside the centre. The workers and I ended up standing outside on the patio when we noticed one of the younger girls had found a very large roll of Styrofoam sheets for packing boxes. She was dragging it in front of us across the grass and one of the workers looked at her and asked, where did you find that? What are you doing with that? She just stared back at us as she continued to

drag it behind her and kind of smiled and said, “I don’t know” and shrugged as she walked and continued to look around at the other kids. The two workers and I kind of laughed to each other and made comments about how the packaging is sometimes more fun than the toy. We went back inside and continued with the usual activities; some kids were playing with the wii and a few of us sat and played cards. Near the end of the night we started to hear a lot more noise coming from outside, and when we looked up and we saw a scene which I can best describe as being out of a “where’s Waldo” book, crammed with people engaged in different activities. All of the kids outside had gotten a hold of the Styrofoam and ripped it up into what small pieces that were littered all over the ground. There was so much of it that it looked like confetti or snow. The kids were running with sheets of it trailing behind them, tearing it up even more, smacking each other and chasing each other with rolls of it, while some were strangling other kids with it on the basketball court. They were screaming and yelling, but for the most part everyone seemed to be having a really good time. Both the workers and I kind of stood there stunned for a second and I think I said, “oh my god”. We all went outside and watched as they played. I didn’t think anyone was being hurt too badly, even the ones that were smacking and strangling each other were taking turns and didn’t seem to want to be interrupted. I couldn’t believe it, it looked so crazy and out of control, and at the same time really funny and kind of beautiful with all this white Styrofoam floating around.

The reaction of both of the workers was also interesting; the male worker watched from the patio and yelled at a few of the kids that they were going to have to clean this all up. The kids weren’t paying attention to us at all though. And finally he

turned to me and shrugged and said, well its not happening in the centre, I can't really control what's happening outside of the building. The female worker seemed horrified and upset and walked into the open yard and told a few of the kids that it was their responsibility to clean up the mess and to stop hitting each other. She came back in as the other worker and I were closing up the centre and she seemed frustrated. I was still laughing when I said to her, "I can't believe that scene, it's amazing, there is so much of that Styrofoam stuff its everywhere!" She told me that she had tried to get some of them to clean it up and then said, "they don't even care about their neighbourhood or what it looks like." She said she was frustrated that some of the parents were sitting outside on their porches watching the scene and saying nothing and that it must mean that they don't care what the neighbourhood looks like either and that they just let the kids run wild.

Wild and messy youth

This evening was one of the first examples where I watched the youth workers struggle with trying to control the actions of youth. What stuck out at me about this experience was the energy of the youth and also the reaction of the workers. My observations of the youth were that they were very physical and playful and didn't seem to take much note of the attempts of the workers to stop them from doing anything. The two youth workers reacted to the situation with concern for cleanliness of the neighbourhood and safety of the youth. The area where the youth had been "making a mess" was not officially a space that the workers were responsible for, and this had prompted the male youth worker to back off intervening after safety of the youth had been assessed. However, the female worker continued to try and stop the

youth from playing and help her clean up. Her comments about the youth and the adults “not caring” about their neighbourhood bothered me. She had framed the youth as wild animals that were not civilized enough to care about being clean and orderly and had also framed the parents or adults from the community in the same way due to their reluctance to control the behaviour of the youth. The negative judgment on the parents in the community was based on their apparent refusal to take control of the situation and perhaps their refusal to assert their adult authority like she had done. Her comment had also made a generalization about the community itself or the people who lived in this community as people who “don’t care”. I wondered if there was any assumptions made of the community based on class and what connection that might have to discourses of responsibility and “caring” for cleanliness in a community of people.

The newly installed surveillance cameras

Field note, Thursday, June 4, 2009, Community development meeting

At the centre one night of programming a week was dedicated to a community development meeting that was run by a community development worker who came in to meet and work with the youth. This youth worker was dedicated to the task of community development at a number of the social housing complexes where other after school programs were run by the same agency. During my volunteer hours at the centre I sat in on the last two meetings of the year where the youth and youth workers met to plan a couple of year end projects that they had received funding for. These meetings were run like an “official business meeting” with an agenda that the group attempted to work through, meeting minutes that were taken by a weekly volunteer and

votes taken by the group to pass decisions. At this particular meeting, the community development worker had a couple of items to discuss with the youth that had come in from some of the agency representatives who are key players in the funding and organization of the program. The first item was from the public housing authority in regards to the surveillance cameras that had been recently installed in the complex. The worker announced, “you are being watched” and issued a warning that the youth who had thrown basketballs at the cameras could be clearly identified in surveillance footage and that they were youth that used the centre. The worker stated “you will be identified, and you will be on the hook if there is any damage, they know who you are”. After this warning the worker wanted to know what the youth thought could be done to avoid damage being done to the cameras. A few of the youth suggested that if they put cages around the cameras, then maybe they would be protected and no one would get in trouble. The group then decided that this suggestion would be made to the housing authority through the worker. One of the youth workers on staff added to the discussion that the youth also needed to stop playing with the computer and electronics upstairs in one of the rooms because this is where the surveillance equipment is housed and that they shouldn’t touch it.

Adults are invisible – youth are watched

Groups of people who are considered to be risky and dangerous are often the subject of surveillance and youth is no exception (Giroux, 2003). Much of the literature on youth and space, particularly public space talks about the impact of surveillance on the experience of youth (Matthews, Taylor, Percy-Smith, & Limb, 2000; Nolan, 2003) . Very often surveillance cameras are used in public or semi-

public spaces to deter youth from gathering in or using spaces such as malls, street corners and parks. Foucault (1977) talks about how surveillance acts as a governing strategy by encouraging monitoring and self-regulation in subjects who become aware of the gaze of others and the consequences of acting out in ways that transgress rules and norms. In this particular meeting the worker both legitimized the authority of the surveillance cameras and also positioned himself as an extension of that authority as one of the adults who had access to what is viewed in the camera footage. In the meeting there was no discussion of whether or not the cameras should be at the complex or why they were there. The youth were not asked if the cameras were something that they wanted or if being watched was something that they agreed to. The worker legitimized the use of the cameras by warning that youth would be punished for any interference in the monitoring of their own behaviour.

The worker also utilized the cameras as a strategy to scare the youth into thinking he may have watched the camera footage, indicating that the youth who had thrown basketballs might be in the room. As a watcher of the camera footage, the worker safely located himself in the “centre” from which the youth are watched and as a watcher of youth. I also thought it was interesting that the centre itself was where the surveillance camera equipment was being housed or where the central system was located. The “community unit” that was supposed to be a resource for the community also happened to be the hub of the surveillance system that was used to monitor the behaviour of the community. What the worker did consult with the youth about was ideas on how to protect the surveillance cameras and this discussion was approached as a way to avoid being punished as a group for any damage that was done to the

cameras in the future. However before this meeting and before being threatened with punishment, some of the youth had already responded to the cameras and resisted being watched by throwing basketballs at the cameras so that they pointed at the sky.

A donation from public health

Field note, Thursday, June 4, 2009, Community development meeting

In the same meeting the next item on the agenda was regarding a gift the centre was to receive of four hundred dollars to be spent on toys and games for the summer. The worker said that they as a group could come up with a list of ideas and that they needed to take the time to do this so that “they couldn’t complain that their ideas had not been considered”. A few of the youth suggested water guns, video games and hockey equipment to which the worker replied that the rules were “no guns and no video games with violence”. These rules were met with groans from the youth and the question of why? The worker replied, “because public health have their values and that includes young people being active and involved in their community”. The worker talked a bit more about games that might be accepted or appropriate, ones that promote physical fitness and being active and social as a group to which one of the youth replied “do we look fat to you?” and another replied with a smile, “what about poker, that is a social game”. The workers commented that the youth needed to come up with ideas that would be appropriate and had a chance of being considered by the public health representative and that they didn’t think that they would like many of their ideas thus far. The conversation turned again to what would be appropriate and the workers came up with a list of toys that would be acceptable that the youth could chose from. However, many of the youth complained that the approved list consisted

of toys and games that they already had at the centre and that the ideas they proposed had all been turned down or as one girl commented, “why did you even ask us”?

Toys as a strategy to discipline bodies

What stood out from this discussion was the conditional “gift” that the youth were presented with. My first thought was that this gift acted like a sort of “trojan horse” for introducing and promoting the values and objectives of the organization that donated it. The money that was donated by public health was given with the clear intention of shaping and encouraging certain behaviours in youth that were considered to be healthy and positive. What was interesting in this interaction was also the process in which the mandate of public health became known, the attempt to include youth in the decision making process, the reaction of the youth to the limited participation that they were allowed and their response to the conditions of the gift. The worker first asked the youth to make suggestions about what they wanted to do with the money, which they gave but then were turned down. When they asked why, then they were made aware that the gift was conditional and needed to be used in a way that the donator approved of. When the youth were made aware of the conditions of the gift, one girl responded with offence, “do we look fat to you,” pointing out that the perhaps the conditions assumed that the youth were overweight or inactive.

One of the boys poked fun at the conditions of the gift and suggested poker, a game that technically met the conditions but also associated with gambling, a form of recreation that has a negative connotation that is not likely to be supported by a public agency. When the worker proposed that the youth could be involved in picking the gifts and in deciding how to spend the money he also alluded to the reasoning behind

this process as one that puts up the appearance of being “participatory”, but in reality is used so that the youth can’t say that they weren’t asked. By the end of the discussion the youth seemed to be aware that their participation in the decision making process was limited and perhaps staged for the purpose of appearing democratic while maintaining the promotion of the values of public health.

Planning the year-end party

Field note, Thursday, June 18, 2009, Community development

In the second community development meeting the focus of the agenda was planning the year-end party for the teen program. This meeting was very tense and was very loud with the noise of the youth talking and joking and with the workers raised voices giving warnings and using “strikes” to discipline misbehaviour. Much of the “misbehaviour” was talking over people, not paying attention, play fighting with each other, swearing and making fun of what was being said. The youth calmed down a bit after receiving threats of having the year end party canceled if youth didn’t step up and participate in the planning process. One key detail that needed to be decided was what day the party would be held which the group could not agree on. In response, the workers divided the youth into two groups so that they could have a debate over two possible dates. Each group had to argue their case as to why they thought one day was better over the other. They were told that both sides had to plead their case to the workers and whoever presented a better argument would win and the date would be decided. As the two teams faced each other across the table, the youth began to jokingly plead their cases and yell and play fight, pretending to slap each other and then actually fighting and picking up chairs and throwing them across the

room. At this point the male youth worker got upset with one of the boys for talking back to other youth and then swearing at the worker under his breath when he was called out for it. The youth worker was quite angry and raised his voice and said, “you don’t speak to people that way and especially not to me” before he told the youth to leave. The meeting ended with a lot of yelling and warnings from the workers that the youth were still being watched and assessed and that their behaviour would factor into the decision as to who won the debate regarding the party. A good portion of the youth had left by the time a decision was made by the workers as to the date of the party and everyone seemed pretty frustrated with the process. I asked the community development worker afterwards that it seemed pretty hard to get through these specific “tasks” in a meeting and that it seemed difficult to get people to talk one at a time. He said that is was, but that this particular meeting had been more productive than many of the meetings that they had had all year, which made me wonder what the other meetings had been like.

Adults in training: debates and party planning

This last meeting that I sat in on was very tense and I had a very strong reaction to it because the conflict between youth and the workers really escalated near the end of the meeting. Both the youth and the workers seemed very upset by what had happened and a few of the youth had been asked to leave. I wondered if the board room-like format of these meetings with minute takers, agenda items, voting and debates was training in being an “adult” for the youth. The party planning exercise had also been presented in a similar fashion as the money from public health in terms of being offered to the youth as a gift or a treat, but in return for behaving in a particular

way. In this case, it was engaging in the formal process of planning a party, making decisions and taking on responsibilities for certain tasks. The youth also seemed to resent and at times undermine and make fun of the attempts to mold their behaviour by mocking and criticizing much of the process. Despite the overt attempts of the youth workers to shape, influence and discipline the behaviour of the youth, it did not seem to work very well. In addition, both the youth and the workers did not appear to enjoy this process and it left everyone annoyed and frustrated.

These meetings had been my first exposure to some of the regular programming that happened at the centre and they had been very interesting to me because I got to watch the dynamics between the workers and the youth. I did not have much experience working with this age group and I was very interested in seeing how the workers interacted with youth, what they did together and how they did it. I was also reading and learning about Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and how to work with youth from a decolonizing perspective and I interested in seeing how youth work was a site of power or a site of power dynamics between youth and adults. In a way these meetings scared me because I was worried about how the photovoice workshops would play out and if they would be similar. The youth were very active and loud and I was not used to "teaching" or facilitating groups that might not be interested in being facilitated. I also did not want to have to yell or discipline youth in order to facilitate a workshop and wondered how the youth would react to me and to the project.

Chapter 5: An Attempt at Facilitating “Photovoice”

In Chapter 4 I outlined and deconstructed some of my early experiences at the youth centre in Dovercourt. In many of these experiences I felt like a fly on the wall, watching how the youth workers interacted with the youth, how youth responded and interacted with each other. My initial observations during the community development meetings made a big impression on me. I watched youth workers struggle with getting the youth to attend regular meetings, sit down, stop talking over one another and listen, follow instructions regarding the meeting itinerary and engage in decision making regarding proposed projects. I was worried and wary of how I was going to engage the youth who had seemed interested and signed up for the workshops. How was I going to facilitate a photography project or a set of photovoice workshops if the youth were not interested in participating? Was I going to rely on tactics to persuade or encourage youth to participate in the workshops or in the steps of photovoice? How would these tactics be different from disciplinary youth work? I did not want to use my authority as an “adult” to try and force youth to participate and I didn’t want them to feel that they had to act in a certain way or take pictures of certain things to be in the study. However I did have a set of research questions that I wanted to answer and needed to collect data in order to do this.

Facilitating the workshop schedule

In this chapter, I describe and then analyze my attempt to facilitate the steps of photovoice. There were many ups and downs for me in attempting to run a series of workshops that adhered to the photovoice process. At the outset of this project I decided to leave the third and riskiest step of exhibition or representation as optional

so that I wouldn't be pushing the youth into doing anything that they might not want to. However, an exhibition or presentation of images was not the only step of photovoice that became a challenge or was a site of struggle. Other issues that arose in earlier steps of the process was the lack of interest on the part of youth to attend structured workshops, set an agenda, complete specific photography assignments, and engage in group discussion and reflection on photographs.

Overall, my attempt to engage youth in the formal steps of photovoice has to be considered a failure. However an analysis of these moments from a Foucauldian perspective, where I may have failed to engage youth in specific tasks is of interest because it may also be where power is made visible. If power is productive, what were the steps of photovoice attempting to produce, or how were they attempting to produce youth or the experience of youth in a particular way? Further, if youth resisted elements of photovoice, what were they resisting and why? After describing my experience, I present an analysis of the photovoice process from a Foucauldian perspective and using a decolonizing lens.

Meeting the youth and introducing myself

The photovoice workshops officially began on June 1, 2009, which was the first date where I held an official meeting where participants could confirm their interest, ask questions and complete permission forms. At this first meeting I introduced the concept of photovoice, talked about the potential assignments that we could do, the purpose of the research study and the idea of buying digital cameras for us to use and share over the next four to five weeks. It was in this meeting that the youth and I officially met as a group and I articulated to them who I was, why I was

there and why I wanted to work with them. In this meeting the youth also articulated to me who they thought I was and why I might be approaching them with a project.

After some chatter and few interruptions from youth asking what we were doing and then leaving, we finally got the door closed. They continued to talk and joke with each other and the noise level went up again. I tried to start talking over them to see if they would start to listen and a couple of the girls started to shush each other and say things like “guys this is her project, shhhhhh, listen!” It is difficult to get everyone quiet for very long, once they started to notice that I was ready to begin and explain what we were going to be doing, the shhking turned into an argument that went on for another five minutes or so. When it got quiet enough for me to talk I started to tell them who I was and why I was here and that I was a student at Brock. They were surprised that I was a student and Max said, “I thought you were a mom or something.” Carmen thought that I was there to do the same job as the community development worker, and when I said no, that this was part of my own project that I was doing, they asked if they were allowed to swear during our session. I kind of hesitated and said, well yah I don’t really care if you swear, and a couple of the youth were like really? And then started swearing as much as they could. This turned into another big conversation with the kids kind of yelling at each other and joking. I raised my voice again and said, okay maybe you can swear but as long as we are respectful towards each other. They kind of laughed but agreed and I continued with an overview of the different assignments that we could do together.

After hearing the youths comments about thinking “I was a mom or something” or that I was another community development worker I realized the youth viewed me as both an adult and as a youth worker running a project similar to those that they had participated in throughout the year. I hadn’t worked with “youth” that were that much younger than me before and I began to question how well we were going to be able to relate to one another. My concern about being perceived as a community development worker was that they would assume that our meetings would play out in a similar fashion, which had seemed antagonistic and not very successful or enjoyable. In hindsight I could see why the youth would suspect that I was there to run a project similar to the ones they had experienced before. I was approaching them in a similar way and in the context of the youth centre. Even though this was a new experience for me, this was not new for them. Adults who sought to “engage” youth in different projects had approached this group many times through the youth centre. I wondered what the youth thought about these initiatives and I asked one of the girls later that same evening why she thought that people came to the neighbourhood to run programs, to which she replied, “I don’t know, they come to keep us from getting into trouble, so we don’t do bad stuff”. As a facilitator and as a youth worker I had to consider or be aware that the youth were used to being “othered” and controlled by adults and that they would assume that I was there for the same reasons.

I had wanted to distance myself from a framing that placed me as being part of the adult world, but I wondered about how exactly this would play out in my facilitation of this project. Am I less adult-like if I don’t enforce rules and let them swear and play fight?

Beginning the structured workshops

The following week at the same time I returned to the centre to “officially” begin the workshop schedule, in which I would hand out the cameras and ask youth if we could set the agenda together of what we would like to do and focus on in the next few weeks. My plan for this workshop was to explain the schedule, the potential assignments or projects that we could do and that youth would be able to meet with me and choose a number of photographs to print each week.

I was happy to see three of the girls who had come to the first session had returned, as well as one more who was the sibling of one of the girls. They were getting the cameras today and wanted to know which ones I had decided to purchase. I told them that I had decided on buying digital cameras. They responded very positively and excitedly: Really! No way! All of them are digital? Eventually we all piled into a meeting room and I asked them to sit down and look at the forms. Sitting and listening only lasted about a minute before they returned to yelling and teasing each other. I locked the door so that we wouldn't be interrupted while we went through the consent forms. I raised my voice to try and get them to stop talking and explained they would get a camera to use if we could just get through the guidelines. I had everyone look at the ethics outline and one of the girls volunteered to write down the main points on the flip chart. I explained why ethics were important and why we were doing the lesson, that I was doing a research project, and that we needed to follow these guidelines when we were taking pictures.

As we went through each one, a couple of the youth stated that they thought the guidelines were too rigid if they were taking pictures of family and friends around the complex. Some of the questions that were asked: Can we take pictures of anything? What if it's someone we know? What if it's us? What if it's a cop? What if it's in a store? What if it's our friends and they are too young? We discussed who might be in their pictures and if it was necessary to get a consent form signed for each person. Max was getting antsy and kept asking if we were finished, and a few of the youth were visibly huffing and starting to get out of their chairs, text on their phones, and yell out the window, and tease each other. Our conversation on ethics lasted about fifteen minutes. As I handed out the cameras, we made sure everything was working and they started taking pictures in the room and out the window, yelling out the window to people who were outside and starting to pose and laugh and fool around. As each youth got their camera, they left to run downstairs and outside onto the front patio, which was just below the window of the room we had been meeting in. I stayed in the room to clean up and gather my things, I could hear the girls from the group outside the window talking and yelling and laughing. I stopped and looked out to see them posing and grabbing the cameras from each other and taking pictures and looking at them right away and then taking turns taking photos of each other and the other kids that were around. This went on for a good hour or so inside and outside the centre until the program was finished at 8pm.

An issue that kept resurfacing for me in the formal meetings with youth was control; whether or not I had it, when I lost it, and how to get it back. I wondered about the lack of control I had over the group and whether or not that was “good” or “bad”. As I wrote in my notes:

I think they may have a particular dynamic because they all know each other already and live in the same place. It might be different with youth who don't know each other. This might also put me in less of an authoritative role, they definitely have the power in some ways, I have to fight to get their attention and to get them to do anything. I might need to be stricter about start times – but is that participatory????”

The dynamic that was playing out between the youth and I in the workshops was not congruent with the idea of sharing power through participatory methods. In many ways the youth were enacting power already by engaging and participating in the meetings or workshops on their own terms and not necessarily the way I thought they would or had asked them to. I reflected on the tactics that the workers had used to gain control over youth and to persuade youth to sit and pay attention and participate. I began to understand why the workers had to use bribes or threats to get the youth to participate in the way that was needed to conduct a meeting.

I too had raised my voice in this meeting so that the youth would stop talking and listen and it had worked for a brief moment but not for very long. Plus, I didn't like it; raising my voice and pleading for their attention made me feel like a teacher. I didn't know where this left me with in terms of running a project, getting to know the

youth, and answering my set of research questions regarding their experiences in public spaces.

The photovoice workshops was becoming something I was trying to get youth to do, even nagging them to participate, instead of something that was youth driven or “participatory” and collaborative. A comment that one of the girls made had also struck a cord with me, in sensing my frustration and attempts to get through the agenda in a meeting she told everyone to be quiet and pay attention because this was my school project. Her articulation of this as being my project highlighted further the youths perception that I was an adult, here to get them to participate in “my” project, which is quite a contrast to the participatory ideals of working with someone for their benefit or purposes.

I had to find ways of negotiating my own research objectives with the wants and objectives of each of the youth. Despite the “failure” to engage in traditional photovoice workshops, I focused on what seemed to be working in terms of what the youth did respond to and seemed to enjoy. I reflected in my notes on what I should do next:

What am I doing here? How were we going to work together, be creative and share experiences if the youth were just waiting to be dismissed? At the same time, the youth seemed excited and interested in using the cameras and very excited and bursting with energy. It seems that the youth’s agenda for this project is that there is no agenda because they just wanted to take pictures and have fun. As I watched the girls outside the centre as I was cleaning up playing

and laughing I also wondered if I wasn't missing out on the best part, taking pictures.

Talking about pictures one on one

After the first couple of meetings the youth tended to come and go at different times throughout my visit, treating our meeting times as more of an informal drop-in program rather than as a structured workshop. Even though I had been planning two distinct visits each week – one day where the youth could drop by and order their prints and one day where we were to all meet at one time where they would receive their prints and we could discuss them – the youth didn't make a distinction between these two days. Sometimes the youth would forget that I was coming, make plans for a portion of our meeting time, or simply not want to stay for the duration of the workshop. What resulted were meetings with the youth one on one, or in smaller sub-groups that would change and overlap. These more casual meetings and the conversations we had allowed me to get to know the youth and for the youth to get to know me or at least get comfortable with me over the course of the next few weeks. In the following field note, one of the girls, Hana sat down to show me the pictures she has taken that week and offered to help get the rest of the participants to come by with their cameras.

When I came in today, I was expecting people to stop by and upload their images that they had taken this week but when I got there, only Hana had showed up. I asked her if she had seen anyone and if she thought they were coming and she said she had seen a few people but wasn't sure. I asked her how I could get people to come in and she asked me for the phone. I handed it

to her and she called everyone's home number that I had on file, often speaking in Arabic she asked to speak to each participant and simply told them "Jocelyn's here, come to the centre, bring your camera".

While we waited, Hana and I sat and she showed me the pictures that she had taken that week. Similar to Carmen she had taken images of her and her friends hanging out at school, her and Ramona and her sister playing at the park. She told me about International Day at school where they all shared food and music and clothing from their different cultural backgrounds. Hana was born in the Sudan and immigrated to Canada with her family when she was three years old. I asked her if there was a lot of cultural diversity at her school and she said yes. A few of the other girls from our group were in her photos too, Carmen and Adele. She told me that Nawal was from Iran and Carmen and Adele were from Tanzania.

She also uploaded some pictures from the park that is around the corner and explained how they cut through the parking lot at the grocery store to get there. She and some of the other girls go to the park, the field and the hill a lot to play or just chill out on the grass. They call this area after the name of the street that the park faces. She has some amazing-self portraits where she glares straight into the camera. She wanted to know when I would be coming every week, for how long and how long she could keep the camera. She tried to negotiate the length of the project and asked if it could go until August, I said I'd see what I could do.

Given the lack of regular attendance at any specific scheduled time, I was relieved that the youth were interested in talking to me in these moments and I noticed that it seemed more likely to happen when I wasn't trying to get them to do anything and I would just listen and ask questions. I wanted the youth to use the cameras for their own purposes and I decided to let go of the idea of "assignments" for the time being, thinking that we would get to them eventually. Some of the youth requested to use the cameras to document birthday parties, family events, school trips and graduations and these types of arrangements kept us in regular contact and kept youth coming by the centre to meet up with me, show me their pictures and order some prints. Many of the girls took pictures of their siblings, their friends and family and requested prints to add to family photo albums or to give out to friends or family as gifts.

It was also in these one on one interactions that the youth and I began to negotiate what we both wanted out of the photography project. The youth knew I was doing a project for school and that I was interested in knowing more about their experiences in the places they went to for fun and a few of the youth started to talk to me about their experiences in the spaces that showed up in their pictures. Many of these conversations happened when the youth would sit down with me to upload their images onto my computer and order their prints. I started to learn a lot about the girl's daily lives at school, at home and playing outside with their friends and siblings.

Letting go of structure

As the weeks progressed it became apparent that an organized photovoice "workshop" or meeting where we sat and talked about one of the assignments that all

the youth had completed might not happen. Even though we weren't engaging in typical photovoice assignments and workshops, the youth were still enjoying the cameras and were taking lots of pictures. In what I came to consider the second phase of the project, I extended my initial plan to have the project finished in five to six weeks partly because the youth wanted to continue taking pictures and enjoyed having the centre open for a few hours every week in the summer. However, I also thought that maybe I just needed to try harder in getting the youth interested in doing an assignment and that I needed to be patient.

Just hanging out at the centre

In the remaining weeks I decided to experiment with different approaches to meeting with the youth. For example, since the youth had taken lots of photos already and many of them were from around the neighbourhood, I decided to make a number prints on a regular printer, photocopy them and bring in some craft supplies to one of our meetings. I brought in a number of prints for each person, plastic sheets, markers and coloring paper. In an attempt to get everyone interested I printed a variety of images: a self portrait, pictures of friends, images of hanging out in the neighbourhood and some of the pictures they had taken using the webcam on my computer. The evening started off with three of the girls and the two boys and then closer to the end of the evening, two more of the girls came by. The boys stayed for the first half hour and drew all over pictures of themselves and each other, laughed at them, and then handed them in. Their drawings were pretty funny with giant hair and devil horns marked over their heads and huge smiles drawn over their faces. After a while they said they were done and left for the night. Two of the other girls came in after the boys

had left and sat down and started to play with the markers and their pictures. The girls and I continued to draw and we hung out for the rest of evening. The girls cut images up, put color on top of them and wrote sayings on them like “sexy” and “attitude.” We started to swap photos and draw on copies of other people’s images, including pictures of me. One of the girls went home and came back with her cat, we sat and played music and talked about the week. They talked about a fight that two of the girls were having and how neither of them would come out tonight because of it. Some of the girls used my computer to upload their photos to facebook and played music videos on youtube. I reflected in my notes that it was nice not to have a structured agenda or have a set of objectives that I was trying to meet or make happen and just play and talk.

While we hung out I brought up the questions about the spaces where they liked to hang out and for the first time the girls started to talk to me about the different spaces in the neighbourhood and what they liked and didn’t like about them. Since the spaces that the girls used were mainly in the immediate neighbourhood or on the grounds of the complex, they started to talk about what they thought of Dovercourt. Carmen and Adele said that the neighbourhood used to be better and that now it is a “ghetto”. They said that a lot of people come from outside Dovercourt to play basketball and hang out and take over the space from them, the youth who actually live in the complex. The other girls agreed and made similar comments about the outsiders that come to hang out. I asked them what the word “ghetto” meant to them and Adele said crime and violence and Carmen said it meant awkward and weird, but went on to clarify that sometimes ghetto is good, when it refers to style or fashion. I

asked them how they knew that Dovercourt was a ghetto, or why they thought that it was one and Carmen replied, “because that is what everyone says, we are in the ghetto, I asked my dad where is the ghetto and he said, you’re in the ghetto, this is it”. Carmen talked with mixed feelings about the boys who come to hang out at Dovercourt, she said she didn’t like it when the boys stare her down “like they want to do something to me” but that she also likes to watch the cute boys take off their shirts and play basketball, to which the others girls laughed.

The girls talked about another summer program that they liked that used to come to the big park at the complex that was run by a couple who played games with the kids and gave out prizes, but that it didn’t run anymore. They said that programs like that kept away the older kids who came to hang out at the complex. Hana said that the older boys, the ones that stare at girls are gangsters, and then she clarified, they are “wanna-be gangsters that sit around and try and act cool and tough and make people uncomfortable”. It was getting late and some of the girls had to go home, so we packed up for the evening. They said that they had enjoyed doing this and wanted to take their pictures home, so I said I would bring the supplies next time so we could sit and do this again if they wanted.

For the next couple of weeks, I would come on my regularly scheduled visits; one day for the youth to stop by with their cameras to upload images and choose images to print and another day when we were supposed to sit down and look at images and talk about how they might reflect their experiences in different spaces. On some days no one who had signed up was around, but the younger kids would see me drive in and come by the centre to hang out while I waited for the older youth. I began

to question if I should be coming as often, since we weren't really doing scheduled meetings anymore. On one day that I wasn't sure if I should make the trip, ten minutes in to my scheduled arrival time, Hana called me at home to see why I wasn't there yet. I got my stuff together and went over and Hana came in with her two younger sisters. We walked over to the grocery store and picked up some snacks and drinks. On this day, some of the younger girls came inside the centre and we sat at the table and played board games, drew pictures, played music, videos, and took pictures with the web cam.

Hana hadn't taken any pictures that week because she ran out of batteries, but she had used one of the others girls cameras. We talked a little bit about the neighbourhood and she told me how much she liked living there and how it reminded her of her home country in the way that people were outside all the time and there were always kids around to do something with. She said that she liked the noise and she liked the activity and that she felt bad for people who live in other neighbourhoods that are so quiet and boring. She compared Dovercourt to her previous apartment building and how it was a high-rise building where no one went outside and played. She asked me what my neighbourhood was like, if it was quiet? Her observations of other neighbourhoods had made me laugh, but she got me thinking about how much the suburban neighbourhood I grew up in had changed. I said that it was pretty quiet now, but that I remembered it as being much busier and that when I was younger kids ran around outside all the time with other kids. She nodded and told me "those neighbourhoods where everyone is inside and its all quiet, that's where all the cable companies make their money, all those people are inside watching TV". Hana had told

me on more than one occasion how much she liked Dovercourt and that she considered it her “dream neighbourhood”. Her descriptions of Dovercourt were similar to my impressions of it as lively, fun, friendly, busy and active. When I would visit the complex many of the younger kids recognized my car, and usually I was greeted at my car door with excited hello’s and questions about what I was doing that day and if they could come in to the centre and hang out with the teens. I could see why youth would think Dovercourt was a dream neighbourhood because of the freedom kids seemed to have to wander through the neighbourhood, play and be close to other kids. It was kind of like one big back yard.

Analysis through a postmodern lens

An important piece of this project was to learn how to engage in research with others, with youth in a way that was “ethical”. Initially, to me, “ethical” research practice meant researching the experience of others in a way that did not “other” and stigmatize participants. I also thought that in order to avoid othering and stigmatizing I would have to avoid the “representing” of youth through exhibition. I had not anticipated what other changes might need to be made in order to “decolonize” photovoice.

According to Foucault’s (1994) analysis of power during the photovoice workshop schedule there were clear points of 1) differentiations: adult/youth and researcher/participant, 2) objectives: for youth to follow the steps and rules of photovoice, 3) instrumental modes or strategies to achieve these objectives: getting to use the camera, getting prints back, snacks and getting to hang out at the youth centre and 4) rationalized and adjusted to achieve the objective: altering assignments, re-

arranging meeting times and allowing youth to use the cameras for personal use outside of the project. The tensions and problems that I experienced in the first few weeks of the project where I attempted to facilitate organized meetings with the youth challenged the notion that in participatory research the researcher “shares” or hands over power to participants. Foucault’s framework for analyzing power is helpful in looking at how photovoice might rely on or utilize disciplinary power. Specifically the structure of photovoice sets up a distinction between researcher/facilitator and participant and sets out to achieve a set of prescribed objectives and end goals.

Photovoice and disciplinary power

There are a handful of youth photovoice projects that briefly discuss difficulties in engaging youth in the formal procedures of the method and the tactics used by researchers to compel youth to participate in assignments and activities. Wilson et al. (2007) reported that researchers had to negotiate “with students to work on tasks in exchange for free time” (p. 255). In an ethnographic study using photography, drawing and painting to explore the educational experiences of refugee students in Australia, Singh and Matthews (2008) echo similar tensions between researcher and participant objectives in claiming that overall students “contested the whole research exercise”(p. 9). Even in making the workshop schedule flexible and open ended, I still found myself trying to get youth to “do photovoice” where I was stuck having to try to control and manage the behaviour of youth.

When I found that the youth were not interested in sitting through a meeting, setting an agenda or doing specific assignments, I was stuck in a position where I was trying to get them to do something over and over again every week and feeling

disappointed. Other photovoice researchers have noted similar occurrences where youth showed interest in using cameras for personal use and lacked interest in formal assignments and reflective activities related to community issues and assets (Drew et al., 2010, Royce et al., 2006, Strack et al, 2004). Singh and Matthews (2008) reported that they “soon realized that many of the students entered the research encounter to be able to “hang out” in safe spaces with other refugee students, to improve their English skills, to gain access to resources that they might not get in other spaces, and to have fun” (p. 9). Drew et al. (2010) have reported that many of the youth in their project viewed assignments as a chore and that parents had to nag youth to participate.

When you need to have this kind of control to run a photovoice session, then perhaps the structure of photovoice depends on or is reliant on disciplinary power? In Strack et al.’s (2004) recommendations for future projects, researchers suggest that it is worth exploring the use of photovoice “in a school system where there is typically more structure and disciplinary control”(p. 54). They also talk about the need for participant contracts outlining the responsibilities of youth and the consequences of not meeting project obligations in order to maintain youth participation. Having to stick to structured activities and follow an agenda and time line was restricting because it forced me to rely on disciplinary measures or tactics to make it happen. Having to enforce the steps of photovoice or strategically persuade youth to participate trapped me in the youth-adult binary of disciplinary power where I took on an authoritative role to try and get youth to act and behave in ways that were conducive to running or completing the steps of photovoice.

The impact of letting go of structure

In terms of analyzing my role as a facilitator of photovoice I think that letting go of the structure of the method as something that needed to happen, or as something that I had to try and get the youth to participate in was the first step in moving away from the adult/youth binary and getting away from a “me against them” dynamic. I came into this project with many concerns over how to engage others and hoped that elements of photovoice would be helpful. Photovoice was problematic because it depended on getting the youth to do something or to participate in a specific way and because of that in the beginning of the schedule much of my energy went into trying to control the behaviour of youth during workshops and resulted in disappointment or frustration when they did not respond the way I expected.

In Chapter 3 I outlined an alternative framework for working with youth that challenges youth workers to “cease attempting to dominate and control young people” in order to break away from the disciplinary power apparatus that plagues relationships between youth and adults (Skott-Myre, 2008). I have struggled with the analysis of my experience of running this project in terms of identifying if and when I, or the youth and I together, managed to break away from the “disciplinary power apparatus” of the adult/youth binary (Skott-Myhre, 2008). However, I think it was the moments outside of the photovoice structure where the youth and I began to talk and get to know one another that the adult/youth binary was challenged. In letting go of trying to get the youth to do specific things, which allowed me to just be with and listen to youth. Just being with and having fun with the girls felt like we were entering Krueger’s conception of youth work as a process of ongoing human interaction where

“workers bring self to the moment and learn from their feelings and insights as they interact with and learn from youth”(p. 40).

Interacting with and learning from the girls

The girls were far more interested in hanging out with me than the boys were, and I feel that part of the reason for that was I could relate to their experience as girls or young women. I don't mean to imply that I could relate to female participants in the study because our experience was or is the same, in many ways it was very different, however I do think at least a partially shared experience of being female or of having been a girl was an opening into a conversation with them about their lives.

There were many things that I learned about the girls that challenged my conception of them as “youth” and also where I recognized myself in some of their experiences. What struck me about some of the girls was how they were responsible for younger siblings during most of their free time. Hana in particular would bring her three year-old sister with her to our meetings. In many ways she took on the role of a parent. The girls told me a lot about what it was like to live at the complex, how their mothers were close friends and how they all felt like family. They talked a lot about how they felt uncomfortable in different spaces in the complex at certain times and how they navigated the complex depending on where the older boys or the “gangsters” were and when the security guards patrolled the grounds. Sometimes they felt constricted, watched or patronized. The girls did not talk about these things when the boys in the group were around and they asked me not to share their stories with them. There was a very gendered experience of the complex that I could relate to and that I

understood, for example feeling watched and being told where and when I could be in certain places.

In other ways, the girls experience was very different from mine and in the beginning I was concerned that we wouldn't be able to relate to one another. I am a white, non-religious, adult and all of the girls identified as Arab, as Muslim and their families as new to Canada. During the project, many of the girls' families started to insist they cover their hair with a hijab or a scarf. They talked to me about why they were expected to cover up, how they didn't like standing out because of it, but also felt protected from the gaze of men and proud to practice their religion. Some of the girls found it curious that even though I was close in age to their parents, I was unmarried, had no children and was in school. Hana said to me once, that she thought I was smart not to have children and that she planned to never get married and become a surgeon. Carmen, lamented that I was unmarried and not religious. She told me near the end of the project that as soon as I was finished school I needed to find a husband and have some kids because that is the point of life. She also worried about what would happen to me when I died because I did not believe in god, and then added, "no you're a good girl, you won't go to hell".

The girls showed me pictures of different places around the complex where they liked to go together; the park, the hill, the playground, the field, the grocery store. We later booked individual and small group interviews where they took me around the complex to show me these spaces and talk more about their experiences in them. It is difficult to pin point and illustrate specific moments in conversation with the girls when we both related and learned from one another and perhaps built a sense of trust.

This may be because it was gradual, but also because it was personal and related to conversations about things that I would not want necessarily want to report in detail. However, the kind of exchanges that took place in the field notes and scenarios described in this chapter was typical of what the girls and I would do together and allowed us to get to know one another. These interactions also informed the ongoing development of my understanding of the girls, their experience of living at Dovercourt, their reasons for not wanting to share their opinions in front of others and my role as someone who is asking them to share.

Chapter 6: Group Discussion and Reluctance

In the following chapter I describe my attempt to facilitate the group discussion step of photovoice. Following this, I discuss some of the issues that were revealed to me in this attempt, including the assumptions that I made (and photovoice method makes) about the participants in a photovoice project. By the middle of the summer we had gone through all of the “assignments” that I had proposed and I still hadn’t been able to get everyone together at one time to discuss photos or experiences in different spaces. So, I prepared an assignment called “Places I Go” that was intended to get at their spatial experiences of anywhere it was that they liked to hang out with friends or on their own for fun. I attempted to make the assignment as easy as possible to do, basically by preparing a list of general questions and letting the youth know that they could answer any of the questions and just one if they wanted, but to keep it in mind when they were taking pictures for the next week or so.

I had waited two weeks to get responses to these questions and after two weeks still only one participant, Hana, had responded. We sat together at the centre and she went through each of the pictures that she had chosen to answer each question. Hana gave really detailed answers about how each image illustrated how she felt about different spaces around the neighbourhood. As we talked, more participants arrived and at one point almost everyone who had signed up for the workshops was there. Having all participants in attendance at one time was rare, so I decided to run an impromptu photovoice-style group discussion about Hana’s images. I asked Hana if she would be comfortable talking about what she had just shown and discussed with me and she agreed, so we gathered everyone together and sat around my laptop so that

Hana could show her images and talk about her answers to the questions that she chose.

The group looked at Hana's pictures and listened to her answers to the questions about where she liked to hang out and why and what she liked about the neighbourhood, however the discussion did not go as I had anticipated. Many of the youth made fun of her pictures, joked about her responses, and gave brief or one word answers when I asked them what they thought or if they agreed. Hana, the presenter, asked to leave before we had finished. The following is an excerpt of the transcription of the group discussion from that day.

A "failed attempt" at group discussion and reflection

Hana: I'm skipping question two and I'm going to question three. What do you like best about living at Dovercourt? (Hana going through pictures and Carmen saying, eww delete that)

Hana: I picked that picture because its crowded and I like crowded places. (girls are laughing at picture, Hana laughing, I couldn't find a good example of it, okay!)

Me: So the part you like is that there are always people around?

Hana: Yes that's what I mean!

Me: Like there is always a lot of kids out and there's always a lot of people out (me saying to the group to see if it gets them talking).

Ramona: You guys are blind, what do you think those little things are on the park? Rocks? They're humans!

Eric: But you're talking about that area!

Iona: Nooooo they aren't talking about that area, they are talking about the people that's there.

Me: After saying that she likes that there are a lot of people, the picture is helping her to answer the question in this way, that's what she likes about it, so do you agree with that? Or? Do you have a different opinion?

SILENCE

Me: Anybody?

SILENCE

Me: To the group: what or where is your favourite place to hang out?

Ramona: The small park.

Eric: Yah, the small park.

Me: How come?

Ramona: Because it's small, just kidding. Because it's always quiet and there is always a good time to talk to people and stuff.

Iona: That's in the day and then at the night...

Max: Shut up Iona

(guys are laughing)

Me: And at the night what?

Iona: It gets all crazy. It's all, sometimes fights happen, and then sometimes theres kids there and yah.

(girls are whispering)

Hana about Ramona into the recorder: Record that she sucks

Ramona: I don't want to record it, I don't want to record it!

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Me: So it's different during the night than it is during the day?

(Ben is talking low in Arabic to the boys.)

Me: Hey guys do you like the fact that Dovercourt is busy?

Eric and Ben: Yah, yah.

Hana: Oh okay.

Me: Anything else? No? Okay.

(boys are looking at me totally blankly, no one is really talking now, just kind of muttering under their breath, or when I address them or look at them not saying anything.)

Carmen: Someone, say something!

Hana: Okay, question 4 what is your favourite thing to do at Dovercourt?

(boys are whispering to each other and laughing)

Hana: Why are you laughing at me?

Me: Looking at the image, this was another good one too.

Carmen: Eww delete that! We already looked at that like twenty times!

Hana: Stop looking!!

Ben: I can't see from there!

Me: Okay, I'll bring it around. Me to Hana: So what question does this one answer?

(unclear chatting)

Eric: What? What is that? That is a picture of people, I can't see, bring it over here.

Ben: That's a picture of people, that's your favourite thing to do at

Dovercourt?! Hahahahha (boys laughing)

Me: No I asked what is your favourite thing about living here and she said her friends, her friends being close by.

Carmen: Hana who is your best friend?

Hana: I'm done.

Me: So based on some of the examples that Hana has given, can you think of some of your own spaces that you might want to photograph?

Carmen: My basement.

Me: The basement?

Iona: Wait, what was the question?

Me: Well you can answer any of the questions. What is your favourite part about living here?

(the group all starts chatting on their own, I can't make out their conversation)

Iona: Um, I like it because.

Me: Guys Iona is talking.

Iona: Well like there is a plaza near by so that is great for us, and um cuz there is a lot of stores you can go to. Um there is a park nearby, there's parks in Dovercourt and the basketball court where you can play with your friends. Like soccer or basketball or hockey or something like that. Um or just like walk around.

Hana: Okay, the last question I want to answer.

Me: Oh okay you got one more.

Hana: How does Dovercourt make you feel? and happy.

(laughing, boys are laughing and saying "hoppy, hoppy, hoppy")

Ramona: (slow) Ha ha ha ha ha ha, shut up.

Ben: Shut up.

Me: Iona what is your favourite thing to do at Dovercourt?

Iona: Well like it's Ventura (nearby field and park) but I don't know if it's like a part of Dovercourt, its not.

Me: That's okay, of and around the neighbourhood, wherever you hang out.

Iona: Yah, cuz it's a huge park and theres like a garden nearby or whats it called the plant thing, so that's nice. I don't know I like to go to the park,

Me: So why do you like those spaces?

Iona: Like everything.

(others are talking, what was that?)

Iona: Like everything is interesting, the park is interesting, having to go with your friends is interesting. Like if you want to show someone new, like a new place, like people don't usually know ventura is because its inside like the neighbourhood, so you can show people that. So its like a nice park and everything. And Dovercourt? um. My favourite part of Dovercourt would be, I don't know every part of Dovercourt is like nice, I guess.

Me: Ben, what is your favourite part of Dovercourt or place to hang out?

Ben: The little park or green box.

Me: The green box, where you sit?

Ben: Yah, yah.

Me: Why is that?

Eric: Because we can make funny stuff.

Ben: We just sit there, its nice, its nice. Yah when we go to the little park sometimes there are these little girls that make these animal noises and it's creepy. Yah like sitting at the park this one time, these girls, they were making this noise like (makes this weird noise)
(girls are laughing and shh'ing each other – I think to hear what story Ben is telling, I can hear Hana say, they are so stupid)

Me: So it's a good place to hang out at?

Ben: Yah.

Me: Anybody else?

SILENCE

Me: What about over here? Carmen or Adele? What are your favourite places to hang out in Dovercourt?

Carmen: I don't know I don't really like Dovercourt.

(other girls laugh)

Me: No?

Carmen: No.

Me: How come?

(girls laugh)

Me: No seriously.

Carmen: Too much people.

Eric: That's good when there is too much people.

Carmen: Not really.

Eric: Yes it is.

Carmen: Too much bad people, too much fights, too much I don't know, like killing, no, not killing but.

(Iona laughs)

Carmen: I don't know I just don't like it.

Hana: Then move.

Carmen: That's what we are trying to do.

Hana: Oh.

Me: Are you trying to move?

Carmen: To Brooklyn New York. (just kidding)

Ben: That's even worse.

Me: Is your family planning to move?

Carmen: Yah like soon and if we don't then we'll move somewhere else, somewhere far away, (clears her throat), next person please.

Me: Anybody else?

Hana: Can I go home?

Carmen to someone: You're an idiot.

Me: Does anybody else not like Dovercourt?

(Hana clears throat loudly, is looking pissed off)

(girls laugh)

Carmen to the boys: You guys are seriously like idiots

Iona: Somebody else? Ramona?

Me: Despite those things that you don't like, are there other things that you do like?

Carmen: Um, the big park, um I like the big ass hill over there.

Hana: Oh my god.

Carmen: I go crazy on it. That's about it. And maybe like friends, her house (Hana's) making fun of her, her trying to feed me, yah.

Me: Yah having your friends close by?

Iona to Carmen: I'd tell you something, but yah.

Carmen: Don't tell me here.

Me: Ramona, what is your favourite part of Dovercourt?

(Hana has left at this point, I can hear her open the door and yell something outside, someone's mom comes in to see how long we are going to be, Carmen and Adele have to go. Group starts talking, some in Arabic, the girls aren't paying attention they are having their own conversation, no one really seems into it, so I say, okay I'm going to stop this for now.) Total discussion time: 15 minutes.

Analyzing Group Discussion

Group discussion and reflection using photographs is a key step in photovoice where participants are encouraged to share their experiences with each other and the researcher. Dialogue and reflection are intended to “promote critical dialogue and knowledge about community issues” (Wang, 2008) through storytelling. This is also the stage where group members are able to compare their perspectives and begin to look for themes and possibly code and categorize their experience. The general

sentiment in the photovoice literature is that group sharing and discussion is an enjoyable and empowering experience (Barndt, 2001; Wang & Burris, 1997), in a “safe environment for introspection” (Carlson et al., 2006) where “participants can inspire each other to take better, more informative pictures and develop a collective voice” (Strack et al., 2004, p. 52). Wang, Cash and Powers (2000) reported that photovoice activities “enabled participants to get to know one another, build ties and friendships, and therefore bond as a peer support group for problem solving and team work”(p. 86). It is also in this step of photovoice that the SHOWED method of inquiry is used to help direct participant reflection in a structured way.

When the group discussion did not unfold as I had expected, I found little information in the photovoice literature on photovoice projects that I could turn to for guidance. Rarely do reports of photovoice projects describe in detail how participants experience group discussion and whether or not the experience of group processes were positive or negative. One exception is Strack et al. (2004), who reported that group discussion was challenging and so “youth were split into smaller, more developmentally homogenous groups” (p. 52). Wilson et al. (2007) also briefly discussed the challenging group dynamics during the discussion of photographs in their photovoice study on youth empowerment and suggested that facilitators required a strong skill set related to “managing group behaviour” and “guiding critical dialogue”(p. 257). They also talk about a conflict between an “empowerment ethos of democratic collaboration” and “group members” social agendas and their expectations about the role of authority” (p. 256). While the author’s description of the social dynamics of the group hint at complex local level power relationships between

participants, including “establishing dominance, ostracism, clowning and put downs,” (p. 256) they also attributed these dynamics to a lack of maturity on the part of youth. However, was that the problem? Were the youth simply not mature enough to focus on a presentation and contribute to discussion or was something more going on? What might be an alternative interpretation of the actions of the youth participants around their reluctance and refusal to engage in group discussion? What assumptions about participants are built into the steps of photovoice and what do these steps potentially “do” to participants?

Assumptions about the “local”: homogenous and harmonious

After everyone had left I reflected on this discussion and sat and listened to the tape recording. I was surprised after seeing how lively and social this group could be that group discussion wasn’t easy and had not flowed. Group discussion and reflection on neighbourhood spaces was not a topic the youth seemed comfortable with and also did not appear to be useful or enjoyable for them. I realized at that point I had gone into this discussion with the assumption that youth would want to bond over the “good points” or the assets of the neighbourhood, and that they would share opinions about positive attributes. In other words, I had been expecting agreement and consensus between the youth or at least a somewhat harmonious discussion about why they liked to live and hang out in their community. I had also assumed that all of the youth shared Hana’s positive view of Dovercourt, and it was only during this discussion that I came to realize that the youth don’t necessarily like Dovercourt, and that they might not want to talk about it because some of them wanted to leave it. Perhaps youth were

unwilling to agree with Hana's narrative or participate in a discussion about "positive attributes" because their narratives were different?

Assuming that a community is homogeneous and harmonious seems to be a common problem in participatory work. In Cooke and Kothari's (2001) critique of participatory rural appraisal projects, for example, they warn that the distinction between global/local and centre/margin assists in framing the experience of local communities as homogenous. Jeremy Brent (2009) similarly warns that community-based projects "do try to simplify community terribly" and when initiatives attempt to engage a community from this perspective, they are often met with "division, disagreement and silence in the communities they consult" (p. 245). In Mosse's (1995) critique of participatory projects, he noted that when "local knowledge" is separated as a distinct category it is valorized, simplified and homogenized as "there is a general assumption that knowledge is undifferentiated, and that given the right tools, people's knowledge is both recognizable and accessible" (Mosse, 1995, p. 576).

Other critics disrupt the notion that local knowledge is directly or simply uncovered or mined through participatory techniques by proposing that knowledge is continually produced (Kesby, 2005). Just as photovoice processes intend to teach participants to see themselves and their communities in new ways, the technologies of participatory processes may assist in producing new knowledges rather than unearthing local "reality". Development researcher David Mosse (1995) asserted that participatory projects may gloss over the power dynamics and relations at work within groups of participants and that identifying themes, building group consensus and the public nature of presentation of local experience all assist in the production and

simplification of participant narratives. Perhaps youth were resisting producing a new or edited version of their experience, one that would be acceptable for me to hear or witness?

Reluctance to reveal...to me

At first, I interpreted their reluctance to share as related only to the risks of sharing views in a group setting with their peers, which put them at risk of being made fun of. However, perhaps I had made another assumption – the assumption that they would want to share their perspective. In hindsight and in reflecting on other moments where the youth expressed reluctance, I realized that another issue was that they did not want to reveal their perspective *to me*.

The youth were actively managing and limiting what they would reveal to me through their images and videos and in our interviews and casual conversations. The boys in particular seemed wary of my intentions and I often felt that they suspected that they would get in trouble if they answered too many of my questions or talked too much about what they did around the complex. When it came to approaching the boys about their photos or the research questions about their leisure time, I felt like I was constantly trying to reassure them that I was a safe person to talk to. When the boys did talk to me about their experiences they made it clear that they did not want me to share what they told me with the girls.

Reluctance and resistance to revealing information to me took on many different forms, including “forgetting” to do things I asked, not answering my questions, answering my questions with jokes, stopping one another from telling me something, or speaking to one another in a language I couldn’t understand. For

example, at first the boys didn't share very many of what they did with the cameras, or would just come in and show me one or two pictures. They would often come to the centre empty handed saying they had left their camera at home or that they had run out of batteries. Max would frequently come at the beginning of our meeting times, inhale the snacks I had brought, and then leave. After a few weeks had passed and depending on who was in the room, they started to show me some of the videos they had made of them acting out skits, running through the complex, swearing, fighting or making jokes. However, when I would try and probe Eric about his videos or his photos, he would give only a few answers and didn't want to elaborate or reflect on their meaning. He showed me videos he had made of cartoons they had watched on TV, his younger siblings playing, and skits that he and the other boys had made and filmed. When I would ask him to elaborate on what they were about, he sometimes seemed frustrated and would give brief answers, such as "We were just making jokes" or "I don't know, just I thought it looked cool". Other times he would just ignore me and continue to watch the videos on my computer with the others boys.

The boys' reluctance to reveal information to me became very apparent in my final interview with Max and Ben who, when I explained that I would be the only person listening to the recordings and that I would use pseudonyms when referring to any of the participants, poked fun at the idea of protecting privacy. Max had originally chosen the pseudonym "Secret Agent" and at times when I would ask a question he and Ben would joke, "We can't tell you that, that is classified information...next question, next question". At other points, the boys resisted discussing certain things in a more serious way. When Ben started to talk about what they did around the

neighbourhood at night and attracting the attention of the police, Max stopped him and said that he didn't think they should talk about that. In another example, during a more casual conversation with Eric and Max, one of their younger siblings started to tell a story about something that had happened and Eric and Max quickly shut him up. Even though I would try and reassure them that I was not asking questions to get them in trouble, I'm not sure they believed me.

I also began to wonder if trying to convince them that they should talk to me was something I should be doing. And, what was I actually doing by asking the youth to reveal these stories to me? Foucault proposed (as cited in Skott-Myhre, 2008) that one of the central mechanisms of disciplinary power is "the demand to constantly reveal oneself" (p. 30). What does this say about the SHOWED method of photovoice? Does successful participatory research mean that you convince participants that they should talk to you? Is it a success when participants decide to reveal themselves to you or are they right to be wary and smart to be strategic in what they reveal?

What "voices" are recognized as legitimate through photovoice?

In looking at the ways that youth invited me in to see some of the photos and videos they had made, I can also begin to consider how the voice of youth may have been readily expressed throughout the project, but not considered valid in the context of photovoice. For example, many of the youth posted personal pictures online, engaged in online discussion and storytelling about their pictures, or showed their images and videos to smaller audiences of their choosing in person. However, these images and videos were not made in response to my research question about their

leisure experiences in their neighbourhood and did not follow the research protocol of gaining written permission or protecting individual identities. If we had put on an exhibit of youth photographs and videos, many if not most of the material they created could not have been included in the context of a photovoice exhibit. The photos and videos were not related to an overall theme, they did not fall into the category or “issues” or “assets” and many of the videos contained swearing, racial slurs and play fighting. The youth did express a voice through the cameras, but it was not one that was compatible with the goals and objectives of a photovoice project or a community development project run by the youth centre.

There were also images and videos taken by the youth that they did not want me to see. For example, one of the older girls in the study, Yasmin, was uncomfortable when we uploaded the contents of her camera to my computer, which included a few videos her friend had taken while they were talking candidly – joking and swearing – while sitting at the playground. When she played one of the videos, she stopped it and said, “Oh no, that was not supposed to be on here. Let’s not look at that”. I was a little surprised to hear her speaking so differently with her friends than she did around me and the other youth at the centre. It made me wonder about the extent to which she was managing and editing her performance of herself around me and how different she was from when she was with her friends.

In another example, Carmen uploaded the contents of her camera, which had a number of videos of her and her friends playing music and performing dance routines. She had shown me some of them, but later I found a few more on my computer that she hadn’t and when I asked her about them, she laughed, “Oh god, did you watch

them?” Carmen loved to dance and was good at it; she had even taught us all a choreographed routine during one of our meetings. What I didn’t express to her was how I was uncomfortable with how sexual some of the dance moves were because she was so young. I wondered if she knew to edit her performance to suit the audience; did she know what dance moves were acceptable to perform in front of adults versus with her friends when no adults are watching?

The underlying principle of photovoice is that it allows youth or other marginalized groups to find, develop and express their “voice”. This principle is based on the assumption that groups do not already have a “voice” or a way to express it. However, what these excerpts demonstrate is the extent to which youth were editing and filtering their expressions to correspond to the expectations of the intended (adult) audience. Some of the filtering of videos and images were, I think, attempts of the youth to remove representations where they appeared too “unruly”, “un-likeable”, or performances that might be misinterpreted or not accepted by adults. This, then raises the question regarding the extent to which photovoice *expresses*, versus *translates*, *transforms* or *edits* the voice of marginalized or subaltern groups into one that is more palatable to adult viewers or agencies involved in the production of a youth project? In the dominant sign system, “the child or youth must always express themselves with the codes of the adult world”(Skott-Myhre, 2008, p. 30). Further, Spivak (1988) contends that the voice of the subaltern is lost in translation because it depends on and is limited by the dominant sign system in which language is produced.

When participants do not “transform” can their “voice” be heard?

The issue of transforming or translating youth voice returns to Foucault’s idea of self-technologies that serve to transform and discipline the subject through self-surveillance and policing. What images or videos would have been acceptable for a photovoice-style exhibit? Perhaps I would have had to edit and produce a presentation of youth images that would have fit into this exhibit or once the youth learned the context of the exhibit, they would edit themselves based on an adult audience. If photovoice relies on the transformation of participants to learn the ways of seeing and expressing to be successful, what happens when participants are unable or unwilling to transform their voice? Is their voice ignored or is it not translatable?

In a recent photovoice study on the experience of living on the street in Nashville, Tennessee, (Packard, 2008), both sharing power and “voice” was complicated by the extreme marginality experienced by homeless participants. Packard (2008) was not able to engage the men in his project in the typical formal training sessions where participants are taught “how to “see” and produce images” (p. 75). The researcher warned that participatory methods might assume that method alone can allow for participants to become co-collaborators or co-researchers in a project. Packard (2008) points to the participants’ lack of skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of “researcher” in that they often took images that did not turn out and “did not have the confidence or capital needed to communicate their knowledge” (p. 73).

In this project, the youth had no problems mastering the cameras and making images and videos, in fact they were quite savvy at it. However, many of the youth

were not willing or interested in reflecting on or translating their meaning into words or into the context of “what its like to live at Dovercourt”. Packard’s (2008) reflection on his failure to engage homeless men as co-researchers and the participants failure to use the cameras properly and articulate themselves implies that they were not able to speak. Guyatri Spivak (1988) asserted that within a system of representation, the “subaltern” or marginalized subject cannot speak, because to be heard their voice must change, it must be transformed into something that can be heard within a dominant system of representation and discourse. Skott-Myhre (2008) proposed that instead of asking whether or not the subaltern *can* speak, we could ask, *should* the subaltern speak? Why should or shouldn’t youth translate their experience into the dominant codes of adults? What are the effects?

Chapter 7: Problematizing Representation

In the third week of the project I met with the director and programmer of the youth centre that ran the drop in program to talk about the logistics of using the building for meeting with the youth and to see how the project was going. I had outlined the concept and process of photovoice to the organization when I approached them about doing research at the centre and they had been enthusiastic about it. We talked about the possibility of doing an exhibit of youth photography and the director talked to me about how happy he had been with the artist-run video project that had taken place before I started.

I wondered aloud if we could do an exhibit at the complex, in the space where they were comfortable, and maybe just to show their photos to their own community. However, the director was keen to have a public exhibit similar to the video project and offered to look into resources for us to make it happen. I asked the director why he wanted to do an exhibit or why he thought it would be something we should do. At first he looked a little confused, why was I now asking him why this should happen, when it was something I had proposed?

He agreed that it would be nice to have the exhibit at the complex, in the place where youth were comfortable, but also that he wanted to “burst that bubble” of the neighbourhood and bring other community members to the youth. He wanted to do something public so that the youth could get some recognition for what they have done, so that they could experience success and learn about what real success is. He wanted to invite local politicians to the exhibit and get coverage in the local newspaper. Ideally he wanted a picture of the mayor talking and shaking hands with

the youth at the exhibit and to refer to the youth simply as “the artists”. He also thought an exhibit and local attention might show the youth that they have some marketable skills and that this might open opportunities for them in creative job sectors later down the road.

Although I understood where the director was coming from, that he wanted the youth to feel proud and to get some positive attention, I was not as convinced as he was that a public display of images would result in a positive experience – which is why I had set out the public exhibition step as optional.

Talking about exhibition of images

Near the end of the summer, when I was holding individual or partner interviews, I began to talk with the youth again about the possibility of putting on an exhibit of images. We discussed the purpose of exhibition within the context of photovoice, which is to share a perspective or opinion about a topic or experience and to potentially reach an audience and to communicate a message. Some of the youth seemed interested in doing a show and we had talked about where it could take place and what the content would be. Some of the youth were ambivalent about which images to show and told me that I could choose the ones that I liked best. The location that the youth were most interested in was the mall and the youth were excited about this space because it was so public and that a lot of people would get to see their photographs. Each youth had different images in mind that they wanted to show and their reasons were typically that they were images that they liked: pictures of themselves, pictures of friends, siblings, flowers, the sky. Most of the girls wanted to show self-portraits, or images of themselves with their friends. As the exhibit was still

considered to be a part of the research project, university ethics regulations precluded me from including images that identified the participants in the study.

We talked about the idea of Dovercourt or the neighbourhood being identified in the exhibit or as being a theme, the youth were less inclined to show images of themselves and were unsure about representing the neighbourhood in public. The youth talked about what people who didn't live in the neighbourhood thought of it, specifically friends at school. All of the youth talked about the stigma that was attached to the neighbourhood as dangerous or a place where "bad things happen". When I asked the youth how they felt about sharing their perspectives on the neighbourhood they identified a number of issues related to the challenge of representing the experience in living in a stigmatized neighbourhood in a way that didn't contribute to further neighbourhood stigmatization or force them into a position of defensiveness.

Questioning the ability of representation to challenge stigma.

The issue of public presentation being an ineffective way to produce positive change came up with a few of the participants in the study. For example, Ben made the general point that "it would be a waste of time," continuing on to say, "Like I was just trying to raise money for a third world country and people didn't care about that so why would people care about Dovercourt you know what I mean"? However, the concerns also related to whether onlookers of their pictures would interpret their photographs in the way they intended, or if the audience, who the youth assumed viewed Dovercourt as a "bad neighbourhood," would view the pictures through this lens. The youth expressed concern that people who already knew the negative or

stigmatized reputation of the neighbourhood would likely not believe the positive stories.

For example, Adele and Yasmin expressed interest in showing images about the things that she liked and enjoyed in and around Dovercourt, but they were still unsure of how effective an exhibit would be for people who already had a negative perception. Adele had some hope that showing the positive aspects might result in a changed perception of the neighbourhood:

[Adele, describing the positive things they could show]: The gardens, like the gardens over there, like most people, they're for Dovercourt, right? And people's gardens outside of their houses, only their gardens, not the houses... Little Park, the garden, yeah, the hill, people jumping off of it... like climbing trees maybe. That would be fun. Sure, yeah, and then they'll come visit here sometimes to see it for themselves... If people didn't know that Dovercourt, nothing bad happens in Dovercourt and then they just heard about it and they heard of it's a bad place and then when they see the pictures, maybe they're like, "Oh maybe that person lied to me" "cause they see all these friendly people like jumping off things and having fun. They'll probably say, "Oh, this place isn't so bad."

However, Yasmin thought a change in perception was unlikely to happen, as the pictures would be viewed through this lens in the first place:

They'd probably think it was a good thing or a bad thing, depends on what their personality is... if you like, their vision, like what they first thought but they first saw Dovercourt and what people like said, they'll probably still make

them think it's bad but in like a different way, a kids, like especially the kids tell them how they like it and how it's not bad, they'd probably change their minds.

Ramona even offered the suggestion that the location of the images and the age of the photographer be revealed after people viewed them, so that their perception of the images would not be influenced by their pre conceived notions of the neighbourhood or of youth:

Ramona: well I don't know if we should tell them that teens took the pictures, or that we took these pictures at Dovercourt because if they are like oh wow, this is a nice place then you don't want to limit it until they actually ask you where did you take the picture? You want to wait until they ask you that and then you tell them Dovercourt and then they will probably be surprised and everything. And I think you could change it like that because if you tell them directly, oh we took these pictures at Dovercourt they might not believe you.

Being associated with and labeled "bad kids".

The youth also talked about how a public display would force them to own up to where they lived, and that revealing this information had risks. For example, Hana had discussed how at times she had kept her address a secret at school because of the negative reaction she would get from her peers. When I asked her how she would feel if we exhibited images that associated her with the neighbourhood she responded that she would, but it was clear in her comments that she understood there would be consequences to doing so:

I don't care. I put them up on Facebook so what's the freaking difference if I put 'em up, yeah...I'd be like hahahahahaha. I'd be like I live in Dovercourt, that's the truth. I've lied to you all this time, suck it up and walk and go cry to your mama. Yeah.

Specifically, youth were concerned that revealing that they lived in Dovercourt would lead them to be associated with problems or issues and that they would be thought of as "bad kids" or lumped into the category of "youth from Dovercourt." When I asked Iona if there was anything about Dovercourt that she wanted to tell people she responded, "Yah, that I had nothing to do with it". Carmen explained that she was concerned that people would associate her with some of the "issues" of Dovercourt, such as drug use:

Me: And so would you want to tell people about that?

Carmen: No, not really...because I don't want them to be like...I don't know, its hard...they'd be like, "Oh these girls are just one of them, they probably do the same thing too" and all that...yah they'll just think, "Oh she lives in Dovercourt, she's just one of them, they all do the same thing". That's what other people outside of Dovercourt would think.

In my interview with Adele, she told me about the first time she experienced the stigma of "being from Dovercourt" when two police officers came to visit her classroom. The officers asked all the kids who lived at the complex to raise their hands. She said that she hadn't realized that the complex was "so bad" until then and she was forced to associate herself with it in front of her peers and the police. In her

mind, participating in the public display of images was one more moment in which she would be reinscribed as “being from Dovercourt”.

Representation of issues and betrayal or disrespect

Ramona and Iona talked about how they felt that discussing issues or problems in public made them feel like they were betraying their friends and family and disrespecting others who lived in the neighbourhood. They also expressed concern that a discussion of issues would scare away people who might be considering moving their families into Dovercourt as it would shift their thinking about Dovercourt from being a “good place” to a “bad place”. When I asked if they would want to use the exhibit to discuss any of the issues or problems we had discussed so far, Ramona responded:

I wouldn't want to talk about that because you don't want people to avoid Dovercourt, and like if somebody moves out and like they are looking for a place to live and people would say oh you shouldn't go there its not nice, and you just can't make fun of your own, and I don't know what its called, it's a big word, dis, disrespect, you don't want to disrespect the place that you live, and just by like saying that you don't want to betray it, you don't want to betray the place you live, because you want people to be there, you want people to feel comfortable around that area and if they are looking for a place that has a lot of kids then there's like parks there and there's like lots of people and it's a very social area, we don't want them to think oh you can't live here its not a nice area, you wouldn't be able to handle it, you can't live here, like

you wouldn't be able to live here two seconds, its just you want people to come here you don't want them to go away.

Similarly, Ben and Max said:

Max: Some people want to move into here, and that's good but we don't want them thinking, No! I don't want to live here anymore.

Ben: and then they would go around to all of their friends, just like they do around here you know, thinking it's a bad place.

Iona also saw a public display of problems as contradictory to her beliefs about Dovercourt, as well as her ongoing efforts to foster a positive perception of the neighbourhood. For her, participating in a presentation of issues would be hypocritical behaviour, as well as undo the work that she has put into changing perceptions: *[If I participated] people would think I'm like, two-faced, since I'm living here and I'm making fun of Dovercourt but I still like Dovercourt or something like that...like people would like criticize, I don't know...like I don't know what's the word but like, say like you like something but you make fun of it but you really like it. Like just to go along. Or like people at school would be like why do you live in Dovercourt if you really don't like it or like why do you...yah not all things at Dovercourt are bad, like people like to focus on the bad things, I don't know why.* Questioning the ability of a public display of images to produce positive social change.

Representation of both "issues" and "assets" is partial and inaccurate.

At one point I proposed the idea of a public exhibit that focused solely on the positive aspects of Dovercourt, however this was also troublesome to the youth. For example, Ben and Max, who were not very interested in being involved in the exhibit,

talked about how they felt that an exhibit that focused on either issues or assets would not be accurate. They talked about the short films that they helped make with the artist that helped out with the video project featured in Vignette 1 and how in trying to portray Dovercourt as a nice place to be had been overly positive and inaccurate.

Ben: "Dovercourt is a great place to be, it makes me happy, happy!" (laughs)

There was one person who was singing a song for the Dovercourt documentary...and then they made a song about Dovercourt, and I thought it was completely bull crap...it was cheesy...it made it look fake.

Max: It made it look like a really nice place, like, well it is a nice place but like, okay you know where the teletubbies live, it made it look like that.

Ben: Yah everyone is all happy and stuff its like, watching the game (laughs) and like watching the soccer game, it was just like stressing the happiness.

Max: I just don't want people getting the wrong idea...It's not really like a great place, I'd say it's somewhere in between, there's the ups and downs.

Ben: When people first move in here they think it's all nice and stuff, for real, they think it's all nice and quiet, but its deceiving, you know, it's not bad but it's not good.

As a group, we were not able to resolve the issues raised by the youth to any significant degree; the proposal of having a public display of images that focused on Dovercourt continued to be troublesome to both the youth and myself. We did go forward with and hold a public exhibit of images at the shopping mall that the youth had suggested, however the exhibit remained unlinked to Dovercourt. Instead, the youth chose to present their images with a sign that identified them as a group of

youth that got together one summer to take photos. The photos that were a part of the exhibit are presented below, in Chapter 9.

Reasons not to speak – an analysis

During the process of conducting interviews with the youth I experienced another shift in my thinking about my role in a project that was intended to be youth driven. My role as a facilitator of photovoice was called into question yet again as someone “who knows” what is best for participants. I had no idea what effect or impact an exhibit could have had on the youth. I had been reading and researching postmodern theories regarding power and representation to help me understand the limits of representation, and in these interviews, the youth had clearly and easily identified and explained to me how and why representation could be problematic for them. From Tyler’s (1986) perspective, to postmodernize research it “cannot have a predetermined form, for it could happen that participants might decide that textualization itself is inappropriate – as have many informants in the past, though their objectifications were seldom taken to be significant in themselves” (p. 129). In this project, the youth did decide that textualization or contextualization of their narratives about the neighbourhood or their community in public was “inappropriate”. The youth decided they should not speak and this was a well-informed decision. The youth knew that for a number of reasons, what was best for them was to not participate in an exhibition that identified the neighbourhood because they knew it would stigmatize them, because it had happened to them before. The stigma associated with being from the neighbourhood was something that they already took steps towards managing and mitigating in their everyday lives.

The effects of visibility

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) discussed the development of the disciplinary gaze and the effects of classification, categorization and comparison of subjects. Foucault proposed that examination “is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It established over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them”(p. 184). In a conceptual paper, Boxall & Ralph (2009) review the ethics of using visual research with people with intellectual disabilities and warn that researchers should be cautious to push participants into a position of visibility when even researchers do not know what the impact will be for participants. The authors draw from Foucault’s (2003) analysis of the history of medicine in *The Birth of the Clinic* and warn that “historically, the clinical played an important part in research; it was used to classify people with disability’s visible differences which in turn were used to justify their removal from mainstream society” (Boxall & Ralph, 2009, p. 47).

Historically, photography has been used as a way to survey and classify groups or subjects that are deemed problematic, ill or abnormal. Previous studies with people with disabilities show that participants have been wary or unwilling to share images beyond the research group;

The mothers were asked if they would be willing to have a selection of their chosen photographs posted on the Internet in the form of an online exhibition on our supported parenting website. They declined...parents with learning difficulties are known to resent the close, often intrusive, surveillance they come under from the statutory authorities; their instincts are to hide away from

the official gaze for fear of what might befall (Booth & Booth, 1994; Llewellyn & Brigden, 1995; McGaw, 1996). Unsurprisingly, the invitation to turn the public spotlight on themselves, their families and their friends met with a dusty response. (Boxall & Ralph, 2009, p. 435)

Like the youth expressed in the interviews, the risks to visibility are the stigma associated with being identified as “bad kids” from a “bad neighbourhood”.

Exhibition as surveillance

As the youth explained, an exhibition of the youths’ images in the context of the neighbourhood or the complex would have re-stigmatized and put youth back in the position of having to defend themselves and their home. Kothari (2001) argued that participatory work supports a one-way form of surveillance towards participants, that “the traffic of surveillance travels one way: towards the subject upon whom the technique is exercised...the subject of the surveillance does not have the reciprocal power to “observe” and comment upon the role and actions of the observer” (p. 145). Ramona pointed out that an exhibit of images would be “one-way” when she suggested that we stand in front of it and ask people what they think of Dovercourt and then show them the photos and ask them if it changed their perspective.

Foucault (1977, 1978) proposed that disciplinary power functions to produce the “other”, demand the “other” reveal themselves for the purpose of study and coding and then enlist the subject in attempting to solve their problematic status through self-technologies and transformation. The assumption in photovoice is that representation is capable of overcoming stigma through the expression of counter narratives that might challenge dominant conceptions of “others”. However, this framework also

seems to make the marginalized status of or stigma associated with the “other”, participants problem to solve, in that they are enlisted to prove to others that they are not so bad, all within a system of representation that does not allow them to be anything but “other”. Should it be the job of youth to convince adults that despite where they live, they are still “good kids”? Should it be the job of youth to overcome a stigma that is imposed on them?

Resisting stigmatization

Within the literature on photovoice projects there are a number of instances where participants have expressed hesitation and worry over the exhibition or publication of their photographs (Drew et al., 2010, Walsh et al., 2008, Prins, 2010, Packard, 2008, Strack et al., 2004). In our interviews, all of the youth expressed concern that an exhibit about Dovercourt would label them “bad kids”. Similarly, in Strack et al.’s (2004) study with youth from an after school teen program, the researchers commented on the reluctance of one participant to display his photo; “It is interesting that this youth did not originally plan to hang this particular photograph in the exhibit, saying “I don’t want people to know that I go to a crappy school”. The project coordinator explained to him the potential impact of his picture, and the youth decided to hang the photograph” (Strack et al., 2004, p. 54). The researchers commented that, “many of the adolescents in the youth photovoice program did not photograph some of the more devastating aspects of their communities. It is uncertain whether this was a concerted decision or whether such adolescents failed to recognize the significance of what they consider everyday realities” (Strack et al., 2004, p. 57). Is it possible the youth in Strack et al.’s (2004) study did not “fail to recognize”

important issues, but instead resisted the scrutiny of researchers or other potential audiences of their photos and the stigma associated with identifying “issues” or problems.

Does photovoice democratize surveillance?

In the interviews, the youth talked about how they were uncomfortable reporting on their neighbourhood and that they felt like they were disrespecting and betraying their community. In Lather’s writing on the ethics of research she quotes Kate McCoy’s paper on drug research where the author reports that she feels like a spy and that “in spite of good intentions “all research is to some degree surveillance” (1998:6)” (p. 482). Prins (2010) talked about the relationship between giving participants cameras and the production of spying or surveillance on participant communities.

In their project with a Salvadoran adult literacy program (Prins, 2010), unanticipated problems arose when the women in the group began to photograph their community and reported negative responses from community members including suspicion, criticism and ridicule. The community was suspicious of a North American researcher who sent locals into their community with cameras and reacted with anger. The reaction from the community discouraged and embarrassed the women in the project who shied away from taking photos or asked male family members to take them on their behalf (Prins, 2010). The negative response forced the researcher to consider the socio-cultural context of the project and that in “communities with a history of surveillance and betrayal by the state or citizens, people may perceive cameras and photography as instruments of surveillance and social control” (Prins,

2010, p. 430). Finally, Prins (2010) drew attention to the multi-directional flow of surveillance in participatory photography; “participant photographers are subject to others’ gaze and commentaries; participants scrutinize photographic subjects; participants and community residents internalize the researcher’s gaze; and researchers are observed by participants and local residents” (Prins, 2010, p. 439). If all research is a form of surveillance and participatory visual methods democratize the research relationship (Packard, 2008), does photovoice also democratize surveillance?

Chapter 8: Necessary tensions

In her review of ethnography, researcher Patti Lather focuses on the value of acknowledging and exploring the “limits” or failure of research and research accounts. Lather points to the contributions of feminist ethnographer Kamala Visweswaran (1994) whose work with Indian women explores the moments in her research when subjects refused to speak with her, engage with her or answer her questions in the way she had asked or expected. Visweswaran (1994) analyzes these “failures” in her research as data in themselves and considers the impact of her research for her participants as potentially both negative and positive. Feminist, postmodern ethnographers have been instrumental in highlighting the contradictions inherent in research, specifically research that seeks to give voice to marginalized groups. It is possible that all research, even research that seeks to emancipate or “give voice” is always a risky endeavor in that we may not know how it will impact participants.

Lather states, “the necessary tension between the desire to know and the limits of representation lets us question the authority of the investigating subject without paralysis, transforming conditions of impossibility into possibility where a failed account occasions new kinds of positionings” (p. 483). Rather than being paralyzed by the risks of research, Lather proposed that postmodern ethnographies help to charter the complicated territory of doing research with others without proposing a solution or way of researching that is guaranteed to be ethical and risk free. When I first set out to run this research project, I was motivated by what Lather describes as “the desire to know” but also a desire to fix or “deal with” the limits of representation. Looking back at my initial interest in participatory methods, I believe I was motivated by the

possibility of eliminating power differentials and either escaping or solving the problem of representation and alleviating the burden of representing others by “allowing” others to speak for them selves. I was also intent on conducting research that was as “ethical” as possible and this aim is what lead to the decision to run a participatory project.

I have come to the understanding that there is no prescription to be followed that ensures that research is “ethical” and that there is no guarantee that any representation, created by the participants or myself will have any or only positive results. Running a participatory project like photovoice that is designed to “deal” with the problems inherent in traditional research has taught me that these problems and tensions do not disappear and that perhaps the most ethical practice one can in engage in is to pay attention to and call out these tensions rather than hope they will go away. There are three key issues or tensions that ran through the course of this study that served as learning points for me as a researcher. These tensions include the ongoing negotiation of participation in a study between participants and researcher, the connections between research and surveillance and the relationship between trust or disclosure and betrayal.

Whether or not research is called “participatory”, research participants decide if and how they will participate in a study. Participation was something that was negotiated between the participants and I from moment to moment. The youth were well aware of the potential of the project to surveill them and they managed and negotiated what and how much they wanted to reveal. However, I found the youths’ views related to representation of the neighbourhood to be very eye opening. I had

suspected the youth were wary to discuss or identify the neighbourhood, as they had hinted in the group discussion, but it was not until the interviews that the youth had explained to me in detail their concerns. I was surprised and saddened to hear how often they were put in positions of having to defend their home to their peers, to parents of peers and to school authorities. The youth had to deal with being made visible through their place of residence all the time and it was a visibility that they sought to mitigate by avoiding discussion or lying about where home is.

In the interviews the youth also talked a lot about the surveillance they experienced at the complex, from police, security guards, security cameras and adult residents. The last thing I wanted to do was be another person who forces youth to reveal and become visible for public consumption. However, by the end of the summer, the girls in the study and I had built a level of trust that I think if I had really pushed for an exhibit about Dovercourt, they would have complied. The feeling of being in a position where I could push them into something they were unsure of reminded me of Iona and Ramona's comments about representation and betrayal or disrespect. What is the purpose of building trust in research with participants? Is it so that you can betray that trust by sharing what they reveal to you in a research text? If there is one conclusion that I can make it is that there are always risks to representation. In this study, a presentation of youth images in the context of Dovercourt was not my risk to take.

In a way I think that doing this research project has lead me back to the same assertion that sent me in a search for equitable, safe and just research methods: I do not have the right to research and represent anyone's experience except my own.

However, my understanding of this statement has changed in that my own experience is not separate from others; it is experienced in relation to and through interactions with others. I would not have been able to deconstruct my role as a facilitator of photovoice if I had not attempted it and would not have changed or learned anything without encountering youth. *This* experience I can explore, deconstruct and evoke through partial and limited experiments using the tools of language, writing and even photography. Rather than viewing the limits of representation as paralyzing, I can engage in research knowing that “everything is dangerous” and that there is much to do. I am relieved.

Vignette 2: “Hanging out at the hill”

I have not included many of the photographs or videos that the youth produced in this project for a few reasons. First, they reveal the identities of the youth, their families and friends, and potentially the location of the study. The youth expressed many concerns about being represented in the context of the neighbourhood where they live, as discussed in Chapter 8. Participants did not want to be associated with the neighbourhood through public representation. Second, the images that the youth created were not made for the purpose of my analysis, they were made for their own personal enjoyment and to share with friends and family, and on occasion with me. Throughout the analysis and “writing up” of this project I have attempted to turn my gaze away from “the youth” as the focus of study and to instead focus inwards on my own experience of working with others. In the spirit of turning the gaze back on “self” and in relation to “other” I have included a picture of myself that the youth took of me on our last meeting together.

This picture was taken by Carmen on a field trip that we took to a local park that I think captures a moment in time that I spent with the girls, but also evokes movement and change. The picture is of me jumping from one side of the creek to the other. It was one of my favorites because it reminds me of what this project has been like for me; something I jumped into not knowing what would happen, exactly what I was doing, where it was going, if I was doing it right and if I was going to make it. Engaging in research is like taking flight, it is a “means of experience” (Tyler, 1986) an action and an interaction that is dynamic, fleeting and always changing. As I recall, speak, write, read and re-read my experience of doing research with youth, I remember a different detail or exchange, I reflect back on it in new ways after having new experiences since that time and in a sense I am still jumping.



As part of this study I was interested in learning which local spaces the youth used for fun and leisure, what they did in those spaces and how they experienced them. One of the most popular places to hang out and explore was not the local playground, although the youth did go there a lot with their friends or younger siblings to play on

the swings and the jungle gym, but was instead an open field in between the housing complex, the local park and the parking lot of a grocery store. The field was an empty lot next to a grocery store parking lot, a city parkette and a construction site for a new housing development. The field wasn't particularly interesting, just a big open space with mud, grass and weeds. However, for the youth this bland, unused space served as a backdrop to all kinds of elaborate stories. There was the one about the large snake that had escaped from the local pet store, dangerous plants and poison ivy, a homeless man who had temporarily inhabited a section of the lot who had scared the youth, but who "turned out to be pretty nice", ghosts that haunted the field and other dangers that lurked once the sun went down. The field was also the subject of many photographs taken that summer including the sun going down as it filtered through the trees and buildings that lined the lot, wildflowers and birds drinking from rain water left in pot holes.

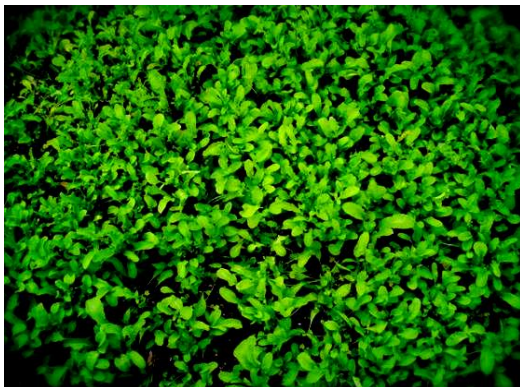
Early in the summer, the landscape of the field changed when a truck from the construction site dumped a large mound of dirt at one end. Over time the pile of dirt grew grass and many of the neighbourhood kids walked up and down it enough to create a winding path. When I asked the youth if they could show me pictures of some of their favourite spots, they dismissed the photos and took me on a tour to show me the real thing. They wanted to show me "the hill" because you could get a unique vantage point of the neighbourhood by standing on top of it, up above everything and look over the fences. On the hill the grass was tall and the path well beaten. The girls told me that some of the kids would ride their bikes up it, run up and down it, stand on the very top of it and yell at the top of their lungs or just sit and enjoy the view.

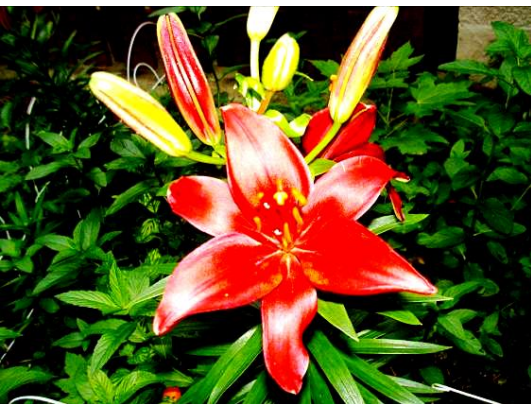
About a month later the landscape of the field changed again, this time a plow had come and dug out half of the hill, disrupting the path and leaving a steep cliff. The girls were upset when they told me about it, “they ruined our hill”! A bunch of us walked over to the field to inspect the damage. We walked up the path and stood at the end of it looking down from the new cliff. It was pretty high up but the dirt was soft, almost like sand or powder. A couple of the girls started to jump off, laughing and screaming as they leapt into the air and landed in dry powdery dirt. We had our cameras with us and the shooting began; “get a picture of me in the air”! and then the dares to those of us who were reluctant to take the plunge. At first I was a spectator and took pictures for the girls that wanted evidence of their bravery for facebook. Then I handed the cameras over and climbed up to the top of the cliff and the girls cheered. I took a running leap off the hill and landed knee deep in soil. I have to admit it felt good; free falling for a second or two and getting really dirty. After an hour or so I had to leave, but the girls were still going strong. Later when we talked about the field in our interviews and how the hill had become a popular site for playing, many of the youth agreed, “we love that flippin hill”!

That summer my experience with the youth reminded me of how much fun you can have in what appears to be an empty or dead space and the value of just hanging out with your friends and using your imagination. I glimpsed for a second what it was like to be 13 again and to go outside and play.

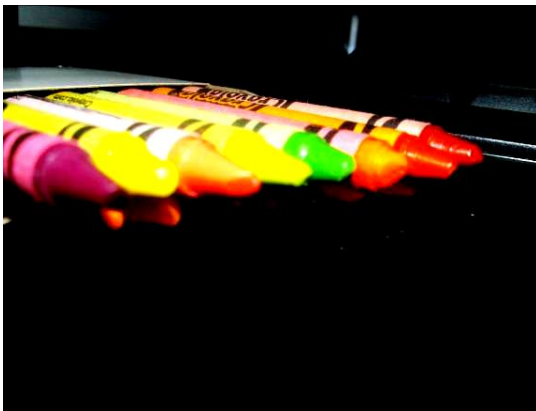
Chapter 9: Images from the Exhibit







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Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

Are you interested in Photography?

You are invited to participate in a **Photovoice Photography Workshop** for youth.

Do you like to take pictures? Are you interested in photography? If so, I am running a 5-week photography workshop that focuses on how to read, interpret, plan and create effective images. The photo projects that we do are a general guide to help get the creative juices flowing, but you can be as imaginative and original as you like.

My name is Jocelyn and I am offering a chance to learn some new skills, and a chance to get your pictures printed every week. If you are interested in participating, you can contact me directly at 905 646 2136 or by email at jm07py@brocku.ca. I will also be running an Information Session at (location, date and time) where you can come and learn more about photovoice, what we will be doing in the workshop and ask any questions and sign up if you are interested. Below is an outline of the themes and projects we will be doing. Workshops will run for about 1 to 1.5 hours every Monday evening from 6:30pm-7:30 or 8:00pm.

I am also conducting a study that involves research. One or two of the sessions will focus on a topic that I am studying which is 'Youth, Space and Leisure'. I am interested in learning about your experience in the places where you hang out, have fun and meet friends. You do not have to be a part of the research study to participate in the workshop.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me or my advisor:

Project Facilitator: Jocelyn Murtell
Sharpe
Tel: 905 646 2136
Email: jm07py@brocku.ca

Project Supervisor: Dr. Erin
Tel: 905 688 5550 x3989
Email: esharpe@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (file # 08-246). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Appendix B: Photovoice Information Sheet

Photovoice Photography Workshop

What is Photovoice?

You are invited to participate in a photography workshop called “Photovoice”. This workshop gives people cameras so that they can take pictures that show others their “world” and their point-of-view. This workshop is a chance to learn about photography and how to take pictures. The workshop will give you the chance to express yourself and tell stories about you, your community and the places that are important to you.

What will we do during the workshops?

We will meet on one evening every week for about 1 to 1 1/2 hours for five weeks.

In the early workshops we will talk about how to plan and take great photos. We will look at examples of pictures taken by other photographers and discuss what we might like to take pictures of. In the later workshops, we will go ‘on assignment’ and take photos around the neighbourhood.

Workshop 1: Introduction, framing, reading images, planning photos, safety and ethics

Workshop 2: Camera lesson, self-portraits

Workshop 3: Sharing self-portraits, “Places I Go” assignment

Workshop 4: Sharing photos and reflecting on images

Workshop 5: Wrap up, getting final prints, presentation

During the workshop you will be encouraged to share and talk and write about your images.

What kind of camera will I get to use?

We will be using different point and shoot film cameras as well as a few film cameras with larger lenses. Before you can take a camera you will need to go over the safety and ethics lesson with the workshop leader, which we will go over in the first workshop.

How do I get copies of my photos?

Every week you will receive one or two rolls of film to shoot. When you are finished with your film you can drop it off at the workshop site. We will develop and print your film and have it ready for you to look at and take home at the next workshop.

What if I break or lose my camera?

If a camera is lost or broken, it's okay we will find a new camera for you to use, but we ask that you try and keep your camera safe by following a few safety tips that we will go over.

How much will the workshop cost?

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There is no cost to you to participate in the workshop.

Safety Rules and Tips

There is a small risk that if you choose to take a picture in a dangerous place or of a dangerous person, that you could get hurt. To help keep you safe while taking pictures, we ask that you not go anywhere you wouldn't usually go or do anything that you wouldn't usually do and to be aware of what is around you. We encourage you to bring along a friend, parent or someone you trust when you take photographs. You can also ask your parent or guardian to help you plan your photo-shoots.

You must always ask permission first before taking someone's picture and to ask them to fill out a consent form.

What if I miss a workshop?

You don't have to come to every workshop, but we will be handing back your photos each week. Also, if you have to miss a workshop, we may be able to arrange a time to meet with you and cover anything that you have missed.

What if I have a question, or need to contact the organizer?

You can reach the workshop leader/organizer between 9am-9pm at 905 646 2136 or by email at jm07py@brocku.ca

Appendix C: Originally Planned Photovoice Workshop Schedule

- Session #1 Introduction to Photovoice, How to read images, Ethics of taking photos and Setting the agenda
- Session #2 Photography Lesson and Self Portrait Assignment
- Session #3 The Self Portrait: writing and sharing, Intro to ‘Places I Go’ assignment and a review of the ethics of photographing people
- Session #4 Reflection and analysis: the SHOWED method and caption writing, exhibition and presentation brainstorming.
- Session #5 Project wrap up: receiving final prints, exhibition or presentation plans

Session #1: Introduction to Photovoice and Setting the Agenda for the Project

The first Photovoice workshop will be an introduction to the workshop series and the concept of photovoice. This session will allow participants to see other examples of photovoice projects and confirm their interest in participating in this project. Through examples of other photovoice projects, we will begin discussing the power of images and the ethics of representing other people or a community through photographs. We will review the Safety and Ethics lesson before discussing in detail each assignment and what and where we will be taking pictures. An overview of each workshop will be given, as well as the logistics of using cameras, taking pictures, dropping off film to be developed and photo assignments. To make sure that participants are involved as possible in the direction of the project, feedback and collaboration on the process, assignments and the agenda will be encouraged. As a

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group, we will brainstorm what kinds of images that participants would like to take, and discuss what we will be learning about photography in the next session.

Session #2: Creating Images and The Self Portrait

The workshop will begin by looking at a few examples of images that contain a lot of information, or have ambiguous or complex meanings or potential messages. We will discuss the literal visual elements and participants will have a chance to list and identify all the visual elements of the picture. We will reflect on the amount of detail that images can provide, and how different people may notice different details. We will also look at a couple of examples of social documentary photography and consider the following questions: who are the people in the image, where are they? What are they doing?, what might they be thinking or feeling, what is happening in the image, what happened just before the shot was taken, just after the shot was taken? What is the relationship between the photographer and the subjects? What was the intention of the photographer? A few examples will be given and discussed openly with participants to get them thinking about how images are made, why they are made, and how they can be made intentionally, and either be effective in the emotion or message or ineffective, or open to interpretation. This exercise is also designed to increase the awareness of the power of story telling through images and its ability to portray multiple perspectives. The process of framing and planning of images will be a focus, so that participants begin to think about how they would like to represent their experiences in their community.

I will begin the session by giving some examples of self-portraits that have been taken by other photographers, both kids and adults. Participants will be asked to

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write a short paragraph on themselves. It can be inspired by one of their first childhood memories, or the neighbourhood or place that they grew up in, written as a straight forward answer to the question: Who am I?, A paragraph finishing the statement “I am...”, or a written as a letter to someone that they haven’t seen for a long time explaining who they are now and what they are doing. After writing for 10-15 minutes, we will then share our stories as a group, or in pairs and ask the listener to state what images came to mind as they listened to the story or description.

The Self Portrait Assignment and Guide:

Where do you want to be photographed? Consider the significance of a light place, a dark place, being inside or being outside. What do you want to wear? What attitude do you want to show? What mood do you want to show? What would you emphasize to show this mood? How would you show this mood through the position of your body? What or whom do you want in the picture with you? A pet, a picture, a toy, a trophy--- you can include anything that tells us about you. Think about the person deep inside of you that nobody has seen. Try to make a picture of that person. Make a portrait of the person you think everyone sees most of the time. Make a portrait of the person you might to be. Make a portrait of the person you don't want to be.

The participants will then make a list of potential images or scenarios that would capture the image they would like to present that represents them. We will discuss as a group, and brainstorm potential ideas, locations, angles, framing and props. Participants will leave with an idea of what they would like their self-portrait to look like and with their cameras to take away and shoot with.

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Session #3: Sharing the Self Portrait, Introduction to the 'Places I Go' Assignment

The beginning of session two will be a review of the Self Portrait shots taken by each participant. Participants will have a chance to review their photos and choose 2-3 which they like the best. Each participant will choose one image and exchange it with a partner in the workshop. Each participant will look at their partner's image and write a short paragraph about what they think of when they look at it, how it makes them feel, what they think the image is saying. We will then discuss as a group our impressions, and contrast them with the intentions of each photographer. The photographer will then also have an opportunity to discuss why this is their favourite image, how the assignment went, what they had in mind when they shot the image and how they feel about it. We will then use the chosen images and overlay them with acetate sheets and use some of the text and paragraphs from their writing, and their partners writing to add to the images and play with the presentation.

I will introduce the 'Places I Go' assignment, and will begin with my own personal examples of images of places that I use for leisure, why I use them, how I feel about those spaces, and what meaning they have for me. We will start by brainstorming the concept of community and our place in it and what it means to each participant. We will discuss how community can be defined in different ways, and that it can mean different things to different people. We will talk about the concept of community in relation to place, where we go, where we spend our time, what happens there. Participants will make a list of positive places that participants like in their community and also places that they dislike in their community or places that they avoid. Participants will leave with their cameras and film and a clear idea of what

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concepts or attributes they would like to photograph. This assignment is intended to address the broad theme of participants experience in leisure spaces in their communities, but is also designed to be open ended so that participants can explore the themes they want and capture the subject matter that is important to them.

As the ‘Places I Go’ assignment moves away from an individual portrait and may include other subjects and issues from the larger community, a more in-depth look at the ethics of representation and the power of producing stories and images of broader narratives will be addressed and discussed in this session. As photovoice enables participants to take control over how their experiences are represented, it is important to acknowledge that our experience is never ours alone, and that participants should be mindful of how they represent the experience of the subjects and the community to which they belong. When deciding what kind of images to shoot and before taking a picture, participants will be encouraged to ask themselves: What am I saying with this picture? Do I have permission to take this picture? What are the risks? What are the benefits? What can I influence with this picture? Participants will be asked to consider the impact of the image: will it embarrass anyone? Will it put anyone (including the photographer) at risk?

Session #4: Reflection, Analysis & Discussion: the SHOWed method

This session is dedicated to sharing the images that participants have taken as part of the ‘Places I Go’ assignment. In this session, group reflection and analysis on the images will be prompted using the SHOWed method of analysis, which asks: What do you See here? What is happening Here? How does this relate to Our lives? And what can we Do about it? This method of analysis is designed to assist

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participants in putting their images into context with broader issues that may affect the community as a whole, and to assist in revealing any connections between their own experiences and the experiences of others in the community. The reflection and discussion phase of photovoice is intended to both promote the identification of themes and connections between participants, as well as allow for the acknowledgment of difference between participants. Participants will be asked to review their images, choose 2-3, which they would like to explore and elaborate on and fill out a SHOWeD form for each image. The next step will be to present these images to the group and reflect on any common themes or issues that arise out of the images they have made. The concept of storyboarding, or putting images into the context of a narrative will also be explored. Participants will be able to arrange their images, add text or captions based on their SHOWeD analysis, or discussion during the session. Based on the themes and issues that emerge from participants photos on the 'places I go' assignment, the idea of presenting or exhibiting the groups stories will be discussed. If the group is interested in presenting their stories to an audience, or to specific groups or persons in the community, locations and ways of exhibiting the information will be discussed.

Session #5: Project wrap up, exhibition or presentation plans

The final session will be dedicated to wrapping up the photovoice project and continuing to brainstorm and confirm any potential exhibition or presentation ideas that participants may have. If the group has decided to present their stories, this session will also allow participants to choose their final images, add any text or arrange images any way they like. Participants will also have the opportunity to

receive copies of their prints to keep for themselves and to give to the subjects in their photographs. In this session follow up interviews with individual participants will be arranged.

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Date: _____

Project Title: Youth, Space and Leisure: A Photovoice Project

Principal Student Investigator:

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INVITATION

I am running a Photovoice photography workshop and also a research study at the same time. I would like to talk to you about the photographs that you have taken and also about the places that you have taken pictures of. I am interested in knowing more about the places that you go to hang out in for fun and to learn about what kind of experiences that you have there.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

At each workshop, you will be asked a few questions about your images with other participants in the workshop. During the workshop, I will take notes on what is said during group discussion. After the last workshop, I will ask you to participate in an interview that I will record on audiotape. During this interview you will be able to visit the places that you took pictures of and talk about your experiences there. The interview may take 1 to 2 hours of your time.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

We will make sure that the photographs you take and the information that you give during the workshops is confidential. This means that outside of the workshop, the researchers will be the only people that will know which photo, film, piece of writing, or audiotape interview is yours. During the workshops, other participants will see your images and hear your stories, but we will ask all participants not to talk to other people outside of the workshop about what is said during our discussion. During the workshop, a 'pretend name' (that you can choose) will be used to keep track of your film, photographs and writing. In rare cases, we will not be able to ensure confidentiality because of mandatory reporting laws, for example, suspected child abuse.

The information that you share in the group discussions may be used in the final research report and other published papers. Your name will never appear in any reports that are published. After your interview, we will send you a copy of the transcript of what we talked about to give you a chance to make sure that everything is correct and to see if there is anything else you would like to say.

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The researcher may use the photos that you take at public events (exhibits, lectures, in books, the Internet, etc.). These images will never be associated with your name and no photographs that you take will be used without your written permission. At the conclusion of the workshop, you and the other participants may decide to present your images in some way. Any presentation of images by the group will not contain your real name, however if you choose to attend a presentation of images and take credit for your photographs so that they are not confidential, it is your choice to do so.

All printed data collected during this study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researchers office at Brock University. Electronic files will be stored in a password-protected folder on the researcher's computer. Data will be kept for 4 years after which time the data will be destroyed with a paper shredder or electronic files will be deleted. The only people that will have access to the data will be the researchers.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

You do not need to consent to be a research participant to be able to participate in the photovoice workshop. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. You may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If at any point you decide that you do not want to be in the research study, you will still be able to participate in the photovoice photography workshop.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals, presented at conferences, in public presentations or used in promotional material for the project. You can also contact the student researcher, Jocelyn Murtell at anytime by email at jm07py@brocku.ca or by telephone at 905 646 2136.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions please contact the Principal Student Investigator or the Faculty Researcher and Supervisor using the contact information above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (file #08-246). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your participation. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter and based on my conversation with the workshop facilitator. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

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Participant Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

(if participant is under the age of 16 years)

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Go-Along Interview Guide

1. What places did you take pictures of? Why did you take pictures of these places?
2. Which place would you like to visit today for our interview? Why did you choose this place and why is it important to you?
3. What do you think about this place?
4. Do you like or not like this space, or both? Why?
5. What kinds of things do you do in this space?
6. Why do you like to come here?
7. Who do you come here with? Why?
8. When do you come here? Why?
9. What kinds of experiences have you had here?
10. Do you ever feel like you are not supposed to be here? Why or why not?
11. Is there anything that keeps you from using this space?
12. What do you think is the best part of this place, or what is the best characteristic of this place?
13. What is the worst part of this place? What do you like the least about it?
14. If you could change anything about the place or space, what would it be?

Original Photovoice Process Questions:

1. Did you like the photovoice workshop? Why or why not?
2. How you feel or what do you think about taking photos of your experiences?
3. Did you find the process helped you communicate your point of view?

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4. How did you feel or what did you think about sharing your images with others?
5. What do you feel that you got out of the photovoice experience?
6. How do feel or what do you think about the presentation or display that we put together?
7. Did you enjoy exhibiting your images?
8. What did you get out of the exhibit?
9. Would you participate in a workshop again? Why or why not?
10. Do you think you might continue to take pictures?

Revised Photovoice Process Questions:

1. Would you like to put on an exhibit of some of your images? Why or why not?
2. Which images would you want to display? Why?
3. How would you feel about putting on an exhibit of images about the neighbourhood? Why?